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The Bryant University Honors Program



Fall 2023 Thesis Presentations

Celebration of Academic Excellence and Innovation

**Senior Honors Scholars
Project Summaries**

Raising Standards of Excellence and Scholarship

Bryant University Honors Program
Raising Standards of Excellence and Scholarship

CALENDAR OF PRESENTATIONS

Wednesday, November 29th

<i>Presenter</i>	<i>Presentation Time</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Project Summary</i>
Saketh Dantuluri	2:00-2:30	AIC 212	Page 5
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Enidia Xhokaxhiu	2:00-2:30	AIC 118	Page 13
Ethan Kmiecik	2:30-3:00	AIC 212	Page 7
Megan Lempke	2:30-3:00	AIC 119	Page 10
Matthew Sprague	2:30-3:00	AIC 118	Page 11
Lauren Adriaansen	3:00-3:30	AIC 212	Page 3
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Bryant University Honors Program

Raising Standards of Excellence and Scholarship

CELEBRATION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Lauren Adriaansen
Wednesday, November 29th
3:30 PM
AIC Room 212

Gig Work & College Students: An Analysis of the Student Employment Experience

Faculty Advisor: Professor Kristin Taylor-Costello
Lecturer of Politics, Law, and Society

Editorial Reviewer: Dr. Judith McDonnell
Professor of Politics, Law, and Society

Type of Thesis: Survey Research

Research Question or Hypothesis:

RQ1: What factors of gig work contribute to a positive college student employment experience?

RQ2: How does gig work contribute to students' ability to maintain a work-life balance?

Methodology:

A survey with 87 consumer responses investigated undergraduate students' experience with working while in college. The results were then analyzed to identify if there were factors of a job which contribute to a better feeling of work-life balance.

Results and Conclusion:

The results contradicted the belief that people in the gig economy have a better work life balance, as students who did gig work were more likely to say they couldn't balance their school, work, and extracurriculars. Additionally, people who felt they do have a work-life balance, cited flexible hours and having control over the type of work they did as the most influential reasons for choosing that type of work.

Contribution:

Students should seek jobs with flexible hours and that allow them to have control over the kind of work, in order to better balance their school, work, and extracurriculars.



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CELEBRATION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Katharine Cross

Wednesday, November 29th

3:00 PM

AIC Room 119

*Identification of Significant Gene Expression Changes
Incorporating Heterogeneity in Perturbation Experiments*

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Tingting Zhao

Assistant Professor of Information Systems and Analytics

Editorial Reviewer: Dr. Brian Blais

Professor of Biological and Biomedical Sciences

Type of Thesis: Empirical - Quantitative Study

Research Question or Hypothesis:

Is there diversity across the gene pool which impacts gene expression changes?

Methodology:

K-means Clustering Analysis, Model-Y Knockoff Generation, Gaussian Mixture Knockoff Generation, Analysis of Results

Results and Conclusion:

Major differences were found between the subpopulations, signaling the need for incorporating heterogeneity when studying perturbation experiments. Cluster zero had a high number of genes which were up-regulated, while cluster one had many down-regulated genes. The gene CCND2 was down-regulated by the Vorinostat treatment. High expressions of CCND2 are found in tumors, thus the Vorinostat treatment resulting in down-regulation of this gene may be beneficial for future drug repurposing.

Contribution:

This research has the potential to aid future drug discovery and re-purposing by facilitating better understanding of the mechanism of the disease and identifying new drug targets.



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Saketh Dantuluri
Wednesday, November 29th
2:00 PM
AIC Room 212

Investment Behavior: The Difference Between Individual and Professional Investors

Faculty Advisor: Dr. A. Can Inci
Professor of Finance

Editorial Reviewer: Professor Jeffrey Koplik
Lecturer of Finance

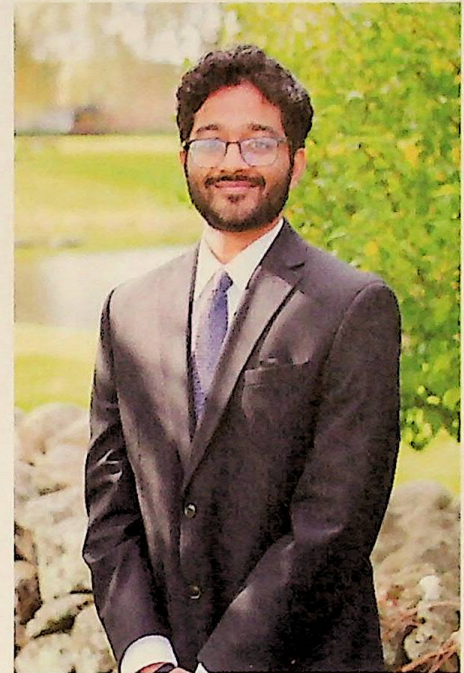
Type of Thesis: Empirical Study

Research Question or Hypothesis:
Is there a difference between the investment behaviors of professional and individual investors?

Methodology:
A two-part survey was conducted, gathering data to interpolate financial literacy and investment behaviors of the participants.

Results and Conclusion:
The results of the first part of the survey were used to create proxy groups for the Individual and Professional groups. The second part of the survey was used to gather data on the investment behaviors of the survey respondents. These results were then split between the Individual and Professional groups to see similar and differing behaviors based on which group the survey respondent fell into.

Contribution:
The information could be used to provide individual investors with the differences between their investment behaviors and the investment behaviors of professional investors, hence helping their future investment activities.



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Christina DiCostanzo
Wednesday, November 29th
3:30 PM
AIC Room 119

Assessing Accessibility: An Exploratory Study on the Relationship Between the Barriers to Corporate Leadership for Employees with Disabilities and the Effect on Corporate Culture

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kathryn Ostermeier
Assistant Professor of Management

Editorial Reviewer: Professor Robert Massoud
Lecturer of Management

Type of Thesis: Exploratory Study

Research Question or Hypothesis:

RQ1: What can companies do to eliminate some barriers to leadership and create accessible opportunities for those with disabilities?

RQ2: How can companies foster a more inclusive atmosphere to ensure all employees have access to all needed accommodations?

RQ3: What factors most dominantly impact company sentiment?

Methodology:

I conducted an inductive exploratory study, which utilized a Qualtrics survey and was analyzed using IBM SPSS. I surveyed working individuals with varying abilities and job titles and used compare and contrast. I distributed the survey via social media, which consisted of posts to X (formerly Twitter) but mostly Reddit threads because it was a quick way to reach a whole community of people within my target populations at once.

Results and Conclusion:

The research that was conducted demonstrated that intersectionality plays a key role in building a more inclusive corporate environment, and thus a more satisfied workforce. Inaccessible leadership opportunities, as well as microaggressions with no repercussions were experienced by many. Companies can mitigate this by laying out clear advancement paths and consequences for microaggressions in their policy and socializing it amongst the entirety of their workforce.

Contribution:

My research contributes to the existing body of work by connecting disability rights within the workplace with the inclusivity of the greater corporate culture.



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CELEBRATION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Ethan Kmiecik
Wednesday, November 29th
2:30 PM
AIC Room 212

Behavioral Market Irrationality: An Exploration of Financial Literacy Awareness, Behavioral Finance, and Financial System Investing

Faculty Advisor: Dr. A. Can Inci
Professor of Finance

Editorial Reviewer: Professor Laura Kohl
Director of Library Services

Type of Thesis: Empirical Research

Research Question or Hypothesis:

RQ1: What degree of financial system awareness is prevalent amongst the surveyed population and how does it vary within the surveyed population?

RQ2: What is the most accurate available model of investor and market decisions, actions, behaviors, and results in the modern financial system?

Methodology:

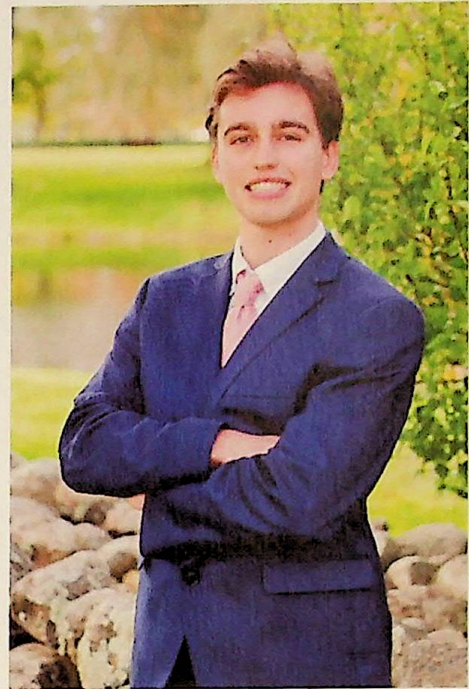
A quantitative correlation survey was distributed via Qualtrics. Responses on demographics, psychographics, financial literacy, currency financial literacy, financial memory, and behavioral finance were collected to support, oppose, or refine the literature on the correlations related to financial literacy and behavioral finance hypotheses.

Results and Conclusion:

Most retail investors are good consumers but not good investors, treating their investments the way they treat their consumer goods. This "Supermarket Sale Effect" is useful for consumption, yet adverse to generating financial gains from the perspective of technical analysis, where the trend continues until it doesn't. How individuals mentally and emotionally deal with their natural cognitive desire to not lose what they appeared to have just gained and to risk more what they appeared to have just lost drives different financial outcomes despite access to similar information.

Contribution:

The research contributes to the existing field of financial literacy and supports the relatively burgeoning field of behavioral finance, where irrational behavior drives market performance.



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CELEBRATION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Nilsa Laine

Wednesday, November 29th

3:30 PM

AIC Room 118

Undergraduate Experiences of Black Women at Predominantly White Institutions

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Alex Perullo
Professor of History, Literature, and the Arts

Editorial Reviewer:
Dr. Nicole Freiner & Professor Tom Zammarelli
Associate Professor of Politics, Law, and Society
Lecturer of Communication and Language Studies

Type of Thesis: Documentary



Research Question or Hypothesis:

Research - Are there commonalities between Black Women in their Undergraduate experiences at Predominately White Institutions (PWI) campuses?

Hypothesis - Black women are having unique yet ubiquitous experiences as a result of their intersectional identity at PWI campuses.

Methodology:

Qualitative Research utilizing interviews of 11 participants, an informal focus group, and secondary analysis.

Results and Conclusion:

The hypothesis has so far proven to be true. The Black Women who have participated in this research study found that they share similar experiences and come together to talk about it, experience loneliness, are confused with other black women, feel an unsaid disconnect, experience bias, and feel a lack of representation in faculty or mentorship.

Contribution:

Colleges should aim to understand the complexities of Black Women's identities and the effects on their experiences. Predominantly white institutions should also challenge their white supremacist structures to advance Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging.

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CELEBRATION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Lauren Lehoullier

Wednesday, November 29th

3:00 PM

AIC Room 118

The Future of Last Mile Delivery: What Consumers Are Willing to Sacrifice to Make Sustainable Delivery Decisions

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Gravier
Professor of Marketing, Department Chair

Editorial Reviewer: Professor Stephanie Carter
Adjunct Professor of History, Literature, and the Arts

Type of Thesis: Survey Research

Research Question or Hypothesis:

The last mile in the supply chain is the very last stage where the customer receives their goods. It is known as being the least efficient and most pollutant step in the chain. This research identifies the sacrifices consumers will make in choosing a more sustainable delivery option.

Methodology:

A survey with 195 consumer responses measured the different choices they made when sustainable information became available. The data was analyzed using the McNemar test and Fisher's exact test in finding statistical significance.

Results and Conclusion:

Consumers demonstrated a willingness to pay more, wait longer, and pick up the delivery from a less convenient location for a more sustainable delivery. Consumers do not initially make the sustainable decision for last mile delivery without the disclosure of the environmental and social impact.

Contribution:

These findings contribute to mounting evidence of consumers looking for more sustainable options in delivery. The industry can use this research to determine future delivery options in the last mile.



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CELEBRATION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Megan Lempke
Wednesday, November 29th
2:30 PM
AIC Room 119

Navigating the Mind: Mental Health Struggles Among College Students During and Post Pandemic

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Ron Deluga
Professor of Psychology

Editorial Reviewer: Dr. Kirsten Hokeness
Professor of Biological and Biomedical Sciences

Type of Thesis: Survey Research

Research Question or Hypothesis:

RQ1: How have anxiety levels changed from learning online to being back in person?

RQ2: Has the college student's anxiety increased, stayed the same, or decreased with coming back to in person classes after the pandemic?

RQ3: During quarantine were there other factors that played a role into the college students anxiety levels other than academics and the pandemic restrictions?

Methodology:

134 Bryant University students completed a survey to investigate college students' anxiety levels during the pandemic in an online learning environment to being back in person after the pandemic.

Results and Conclusion:

The results are that college students experienced more anxiety during the pandemic in an online learning environment than in person after the pandemic. Anxiety during the pandemic was because of the change in social life, social distancing and isolation, and worrying about their loved ones. Whereas anxiety after the pandemic was because of uncertainties with exams, tests, and quizzes, change in social life, and sense of belonging.

Contribution:

This information can be applied to psychology because this field is constantly developing with new information. Psychologists, therapists, and psychiatrists can use this information to help them understand how the college students are adjusting after the pandemic in order to better understand anxiety and how it has been affected.



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Matthew Sprague
Wednesday, November 29th
2:30 PM
AIC Room 118

Investment Behavior: Cryptocurrency in Investing: An Analysis of Digital Currencies and Understanding Investor Sentiment

Faculty Advisor: Professor John Fellingham
Lecturer of Finance

Editorial Reviewer: Dr. A. Can Inci
Professor of Finance

Type of Thesis: Empirical Study

Research Question or Hypothesis: How do potential investors view cryptocurrency as an investment opportunity?

Methodology:

Background research was conducted in areas in which cryptocurrency is connected. A survey was conducted to gather sentiment and create a financial literacy statistic for each participant.

Results and Conclusion:

The results of the regression ran, allowed for the conclusion that the variables identified within the study had low or insignificant impact on an investors sentiment towards cryptocurrencies. However, results directly from the survey did indicate differences in sentiment when sorted by age group, education levels, as well as other demographic and psychographic information.

Contribution:

The results contribute to the field by providing an understanding of the motivation behind investing in cryptocurrencies, as well as attempting to find what variables and factors may affect how someone feels towards cryptocurrencies.



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Lois Warden

Wednesday, November 29th

2:00 PM

AIC Room 119

Unpacking the Unconscious: Mortality Awareness and Its Effects on Consumer Engagement in Charitable Campaigns

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Kacy Kim
Associate Professor of Marketing

Editorial Reviewer: Dr. Sukki Yoon
Professor of Marketing

Type of Thesis: Marketing Experiment Research

Research Question or Hypothesis:

Research Question/Hypothesis: Whether TMT priming and psychological distance have a significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward donation campaign advertisements.

Methodology:

A 2x2x2 between-subjects experimental design was employed to investigate the influence of message frame and psychological dissonance, as per Terror Management Theory, in a controlled lab setting. The factors included TMT (Death Salient vs. Non-Salient), message frame (Self vs. Others), and psychological distance (Proximal vs. Distal).

Results and Conclusion:

As hypothesized, TMT priming and psychological distance both had a significant effect on consumers' attitudes toward donation campaign advertisements.

Contribution:

The research can be applied to other marketing theories regarding consumer engagement in charitable campaigns. The results are helpful for charities looking to help maximize the engagement of consumers using TMT priming and exploring psychological distance within donation campaign advertisements.



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CELEBRATION OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION

Enidia Xhokaxhiu

Wednesday, November 29th

2:00 PM

AIC Room 118

Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on Auditing: Challenges and Improvements for the Future

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Charles Cullinan
Professor of Accounting

Editorial Reviewer: Dr. Xiaochuan Zheng
Professor of Accounting

Type of Thesis: Exploratory Research

Research Question or Hypothesis:

RQ1: How has COVID-19 impacted the auditing profession?

RQ2: What factors of the auditing process were impacted the most?

RQ3: What industries were affected the most in terms of material misstatements?

Methodology:

An analysis of primary source data from the SEC website was used to identify how many Item 4.02 8Ks were filed before, during, and after the pandemic. The focus was on what kind of industries were impacted and what type of misstatements were made.

Results and Conclusion:

During the pandemic, the number of Item 4.02 8Ks filed increased significantly and slightly decreased post pandemic. A wide variety of industries were impacted, but specifically, pharmaceutical and medical companies were impacted the most.

Contribution:

This information provides auditors with more knowledge when they complete future audits. It also impacts the way they complete future audits.



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