

Sample Student Research Proposals

As part of the PSYC 400 course you'll be taking what you learn about in class and putting it into practice to apply this information to an area of interest and create a unique proposal for research targeted toward helping a specific audience. This project is meant to help students learn research design and research writing skills, engage with scholarly sources, and think meaningfully about course material.

Ellen Gruber

- **Research Proposal:** "Self-Perceived Attention Abilities and Attention Interventions: Improving School Students' Engagement in the Classroom"
- **Bio:** My name is Ellen Gruber, and I took the Attention and Mindfulness course spring of my junior year. I learned so much from this course, not only about myself but attention applied to many contexts and populations. I'm hoping to pursue a career in school psychology, and I focused my research proposal on attention interventions in elementary schools. It was such a great opportunity to be able to research something I am passionate about and can use in my future career!
- **Abstract:** Inattention and hyperactivity are known hindrances to students' learning. Past research has exemplified the consequences these issues present and proposed various attention interventions with some success. Self-perception of abilities, efficacy, and self-handicapping have been observed as it pertains to academic achievement. Yet a gap remains as to how self-perception of attentional abilities relates to actual attention levels, behavioral engagement, and subsequently academic achievement. The proposed research looks at elementary school age students. Their self-perceived attention capabilities are reported and correlated to their class grade at time 1. Then, a curated attention intervention takes place, focusing on growth mindsets. Self-reported attention capabilities and course grades are analyzed at time 2, following the attention intervention. Researchers hope to find that students who accurately rate their attention abilities have respectively correlated class grades. We also hope to see that the attention intervention increases attention abilities across all groups. This research builds on the work of self-perceived abilities and self-handicapping and applies it specifically to the ever important context of attention in the classroom.

- **Keywords:** Attention, self-perception, growth mindset, elementary, attention intervention

Jason Cheifetz

- **Research Proposal:** “Beyond Physical Rehab: The Effects of an Integrated Mindfulness Intervention on Return-to-Sport After UCL Reconstruction in Collegiate and Professional Pitchers”
- **Bio:** My name is Jason Cheifetz and I am going into my senior year as a JMU Psychology Major. I took PSYC 400: Attention and Mindfulness in the spring semester of 2025. This class has many real life implications that can help individuals understand different theories of attention and how we can control our focus. My biggest takeaways from the class were the boredom unit and how many things we do, like scrolling on social media, can actually make us more bored. Another main takeaway is viewing things without judgement. Once you gain the ability to not judge your thoughts, life becomes very freeing and I have had a lot more fun outside of class because of information I learned in Attention and Mindfulness.
- **Abstract:** This experiment attempts to investigate the impact of a mindfulness intervention on the recovery outcomes of collegiate and professional baseball pitchers following Tommy John surgery (ulnar collateral ligament reconstruction). Participants, drawn from college through all levels of professional baseball, are surveyed and systematically randomly assigned with a similar individual with one to either a control group receiving standard physical rehabilitation and the other to an experimental group receiving both standard physical rehabilitation and structured a mindfulness intervention, including individual and online sessions. Baseline data are collected from surgical records and pre-study surveys assessing mental health attitudes and stigma. Throughout the study, participants complete validated psychological and readiness-to-return surveys bimonthly, while all follow a standardized, enhanced throwing regimen that allows for individual differences. The main independent variable is the inclusion of mindfulness intervention, with dependent variables encompassing quality and speed of recovery, as measured by return-to-play readiness and post-surgical performance metrics. This design aims to isolate the effect of mindfulness interventions on post-surgical rehabilitation, addressing the high prevalence of Tommy John surgeries and the inconsistent rates of successful return to pre-injury performance observed in prior research. The findings in this experiment

may inform best practices for optimizing recovery and long-term outcomes in pitchers undergoing UCL reconstruction.

- *Keywords:* Ulnar Collateral ligament, Return to Sport, Physical Readiness, Psychological Readiness, Primary Control, Secondary Control.