

# Comparing Psychology and Non-Psychology Students' Attitude Toward Care Seeking

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## INTRODUCTION

### Background

- Despite evidence that counselling and other forms of psychotherapy are critical to mental health recovery (e.g. Corrigan, 2014), less than 1/3 of people with mental illness seek treatment (e.g. Maranzan, 2014).
- Stigma —negative stereotype or social attitude— surrounding mental health deters people from seeking out help (e.g. Corrigan, 2014). Last year, we found that York students implicitly associate care seeking activities with negative personal attributes (Chiu et al., 2018).
- Exposure, in the form of contact and education, reduces stigma and negative biases (e.g. O'Brien et al., 2010; Rudman et al., 2001).
- Psychology students who are educated on the realities of mental illness and treatment should have less negative stigma towards care seeking than students not exposed to these concepts. Whether this is the case is addressed here.

### Approach and Predictions

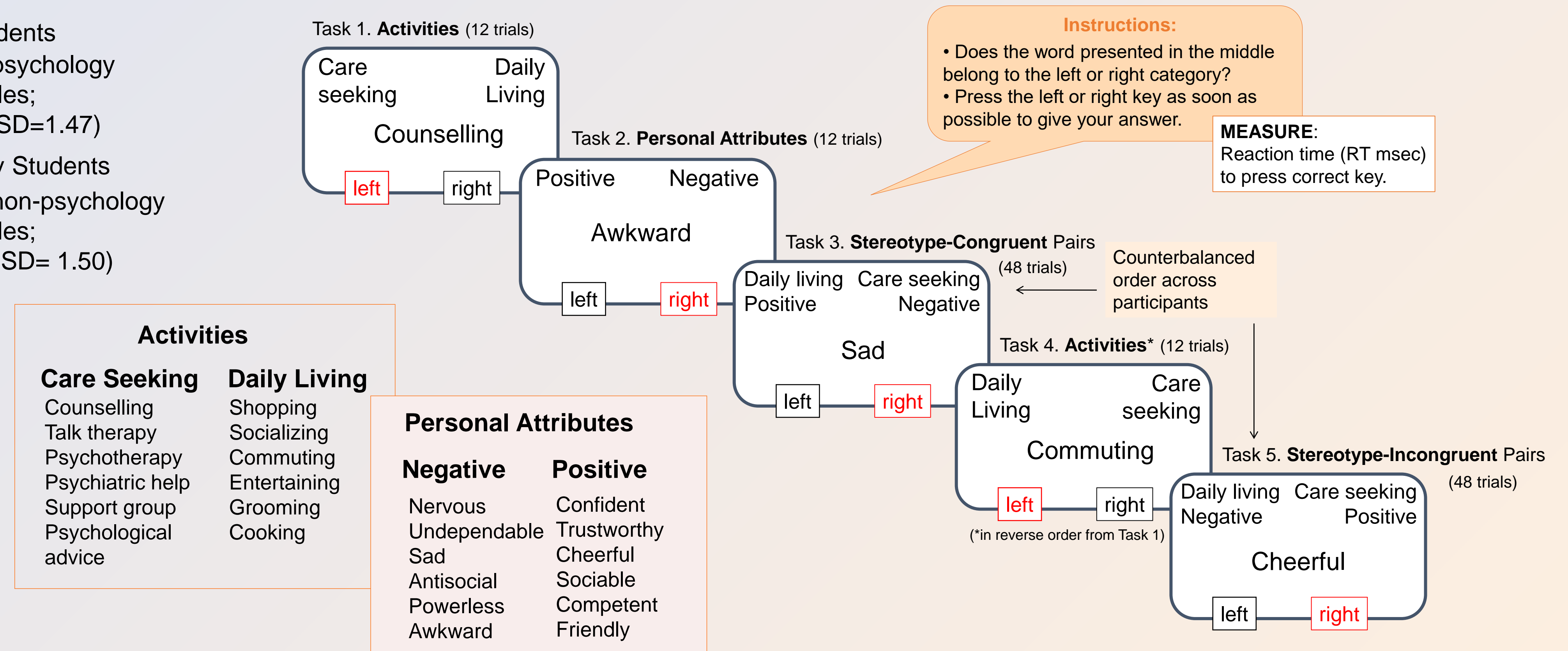
- The implicit association between psychological care activities and personal attributes was measured and compared between Psychology and Non-Psychology students.
- The **implicit associations test** (IAT; e.g. Greenwald, McGhee & Schwartz, 1998) was used to measure the time to make associations between negative and positive personal attributes with care seeking and daily living activities. Stigma dictates that negative attributes are associated with care seeking, and positive ones to daily living (stereotype-congruent pairs).
- It is predicted that,
  - for all students, reaction time (RT) will be lower in the stereotype-congruent pairs, and that
  - the RT difference between congruent and incongruent pairs will be smaller for Psychology than Non-Psychology students.

## METHOD

### Participants

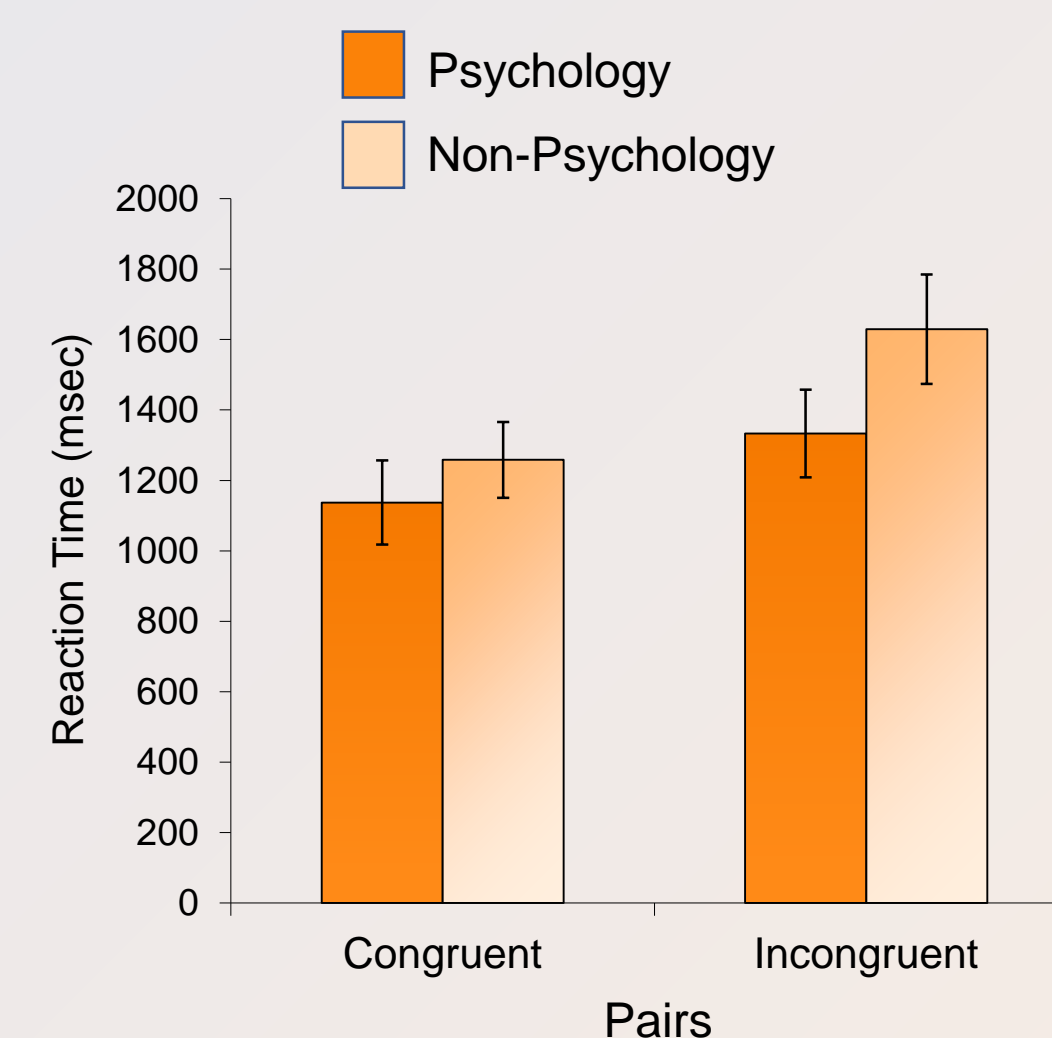
- 29 Psychology Students (minimum of 18 psychology credits; 25 Females; Age: M = 20.35, SD=1.47)
- 29 Non-Psychology Students (minimum of 18 non-psychology credits; 25 Females; Age: M = 20.41, SD= 1.50)

### Task: Implicit Association Test



## RESULTS

### Reaction Time



- There was an interaction between Areas of Study and Pairings [F(1, 53) = 6.37, p = .015; partial  $\eta^2 = .11$ ; Power = .70].

-Non-Psychology students were slower than Psychology students: they slowed down by 121.33 msec in the congruent pairs, and by 2.5 times more (by 296.36 msec) in the Incongruent pairs. [Incongruent Pairs, t(53) = 3.91, p = .0001, and Congruent Pairs, t(53) = 1.98, p = .03].

- For all students, RT was significantly lower in the Congruent than in the Incongruent pairs [F(1, 53) = 66.84, p < .000; partial  $\eta^2 = .56$ ; Power = 1.00].

- Non-Psychology students had longer RT [F(1,53) = 12.22, p = 0.001; partial  $\eta^2 = .19$ ; Power = .93].

### Future Directions

- Universities should encourage students to take psychology courses to raise mental health awareness and decrease stigmatization.

### Conclusions

- All students were faster at making associations in the stereotype-congruent than in the incongruent pairs.
- However, Psychology were faster than Non-Psychology students at making these associations, especially in the Stereotype-Incongruent pairs.

## DISCUSSION

- As found by Chiu et al. (2018), our results show that students implicitly associate negative personal attributes with care seeking.
- However, Psychology students can make faster decisions when faced with stereotyped information about care seeking. Specifically, they are less impacted by information incongruent to stereotypes about care seeking. These results confirm that exposure through education is useful in tackling stigma and negative biases (e.g. O'Brien et al., 2010; Rudman et al., 2001).