UC San Diego
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH HUB

CRASSH

Conference for Research in the
Arts, Social Sciences, & Humanities

February 26th, 2026

Conference Program

Room: Career Services Center
2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Poster Presenters
Jacqueline Pham – Double Major in Sociology and Ethnic Studies
Between Two Frames: Rethinking Identity-Based Harm, Bullying, and Hate Crimes in Schools
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Jiaying Liu – Undeclared Major
Outsourcing the Welfare Gap: How "Help" Is Defined in Nonprofit Food Assistance
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Joyce Yaqing Tang – Majoring in Cognitive Science
Definition is the Key: An Exploratory Study on Large Language Models' Humor Production
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Takuya Kitamura – Majoring in Psychology with Specialization in Cognitive Psychology
The Independent Source Rule on Trial: Lineups Rewrite the Witness's Memory of the Perpetrator
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Jack Howard – Majoring in Political Science with a Concentration in Data Analytics
The Electoral Geography of Higher Education: How Campus Proximity and Remote Learning Shape Partisan Voting in California
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Momo Kihara – Majoring in Cognitive Science
When Culture Colors the Mind: Possible Acquired Synesthesia and Consistent Color Associations among Competitive Karuta Players
3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Oral Presenters
Eric Wu – Majoring in Sociology
Why is popular music popular socially?: A Case Study from China
2:00 – 3:00 p.m.

Grace Smith – Majoring in Media
Time in Textiles
3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Jewel Fulmore – Double Major in Literature/Writing and Black Diaspora African American Studies
Challenging Linguistic Discrimination: Anti-Racist Writing Pedagogy in Undergraduate Writing Courses
3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Jacqueline Pham

Between Two Frames: Rethinking Identity-Based Harm, Bullying, and Hate Crimes in Schools

This study explores how LGBTQ+ youth understand and distinguish between the frameworks of identity-based bullying and youth hate crimes. Drawing on 25 semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ+ youth ages 14–18, analyzed through framing theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, we examine how young people interpret these labels and their consequences. Participants echoed dominant definitions at first—bullying as repetitive and relational, hate crimes as singular and ideologically motivated—but their interpretations shifted when reflecting on lived experiences. While the hate crime label carried symbolic weight that could validate harm, youth hesitated to apply it in school contexts where intent and relationships blurred. Few supported criminal responses, instead calling for educational and community-based accountability. These findings have implications for schools and educational policy, as schools are increasingly encouraged to report hate crimes to law enforcement, raising questions about whether such approaches align with youths' perspectives on addressing identity-based harm.

Jiaying Liu

Outsourcing the Welfare Gap: How "Help" Is Defined in Nonprofit Food Assistance

This work-in-progress is a module of my TRELS project, Outsourcing the Welfare Gap under Neoliberal Capitalism. The project examines how responses to food insecurity are increasingly organized through nonprofit infrastructures.

Focusing on one nonprofit food assistance setting, I use participant observation and ongoing semi-structured interviews. I analyze how staff and volunteers define "help" in everyday explanations and make it legible to others. I examine who they understand as being served and what counts as "helping well." I also consider how they explain why this work is organized through a nonprofit and volunteer labor rather than primarily through government services.

To integrate economic and political-economy perspectives without relying on internal financial records, I use incentives and constraints as an analytic frame. I examine how participants describe capacity limits, procedures, metric expectations, and responsibilities. I then analyze how these accounts intersect with moral narratives such as deservingness, dignity, and responsibility.

The poster presents the research questions, coding strategy, and emergent themes at a high level rather than finalized findings. No quotations or identifying details are included. All information is anonymized, paraphrased, and generalized.

Joyce Yaqing Tang

Definition is the Key: An Exploratory Study on Large Language Models' Humor Production

Large language models (LLMs) often struggle with nuanced linguistic tasks like humor production. But how sensitive is their performance to direct instruction? This study investigates how providing a minimal definition of a "pun" in prompt impacts the creative output of the Qwen-7B-Chat model in a joke-completion task. We found that without a definitional prompt, the LLM's accuracy in generating a target pun ($M = .21$) was comparable to a human benchmark ($M = .20$). However, simply adding a one-sentence definition of "pun" to the prompt significantly increased the model's accuracy to ($M = .28$). A final-word surprisal analysis suggests the definition guided the model towards generating less surprising, and therefore more contextually appropriate, punchlines ($M = 7.27$) compared to its unguided attempts ($M = 8.29$). Additionally, the results of the Soft Turing Test suggest that LLM-generated jokes are identified correctly at a higher rate ($M = 0.4175$) than the human-authored human-authored original jokes($M = 0.3698$). These findings demonstrate that Large Language Models have the emergent ability of humor production, and this ability can be enhanced with a minimal addition of definition in prompt.

Takuya Kitamura

The Independent Source Rule on Trial: Lineups Rewrite the Witness's Memory of the Perpetrator

Despite the recent scientific consensus that a witness's memory of a suspect should be tested only once, the criminal justice system continues to assume that the original memory can remain independent, free from contamination, and be reliably tested in court after the initial test. This so-called "independent source doctrine" has consistently been applied in real-world cases, preventing the legal system from focusing on the first test. While previous research has demonstrated the risk of repeated testing, none has provided direct evidence against the assumption of an independent memory source. The present study adapts and integrates the continuous-report task from visual memory research with the traditional eyewitness paradigm to investigate how memory changes following exposure to a lineup. Participants will be asked to view a target face, complete a lineup test, and find the target from a continuous face wheel. It is hypothesized that subjects' memory reports from the face wheel selection task will be systematically biased toward the fillers seen in the lineup test had they made a filler identification, and away from the fillers had they made a correct identification. Findings from this study will reveal the scientific basis underlying the independent source doctrine, if any.
Key Words: Eyewitness memory, memory bias, independent source doctrine

Jack Howard

The Electoral Geography of Higher Education: How Campus Proximity and Remote Learning Shape Partisan Voting in California

This study investigates the electoral impact of proximity to colleges and universities on Democratic vote share in California's 2020 general election. Using a novel spatial dataset of over 7,000 precincts and institutional characteristics from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), I construct inverse-distance-weighted measures of exposure to nearby colleges, including student enrollment size and learning modality (fully remote, partially remote, or in-person). These indicators are integrated into a series of geospatial and machine learning models that assess their predictive power relative to standard American Community Survey (ACS) demographic controls. My findings reveal that precincts with greater exposure to colleges, particularly those with larger and more physically present student populations, tend to report significantly higher Democratic vote share, even after adjusting for race, income, education, and density. Random Forest models demonstrate a 10.3% relative gain in predictive accuracy when higher education exposure metrics are included, underscoring their substantive contribution to local partisan dynamics. The results support emerging theories of political diffusion and social contact while offering practical implications for redistricting and youth mobilization strategies. This research highlights the importance of integrating institutional spatial data into models of electoral behavior to better capture the influence of civic infrastructure on democratic outcomes.

Momo Kihara

When Culture Colors the Mind: Possible Acquired Synesthesia and Consistent Color Associations among Competitive Karuta Players

Synesthesia has historically been conceptualized as a perceptual phenomenon that emerges in early childhood, predominantly based on subjective accounts from individuals with innate synesthesia. This study challenges that premise by exploring the possibility that acquired synesthesia can also develop through intensive perceptual learning. The research focuses on experienced participants in Competitive Karuta, a traditional Japanese card game that requires rapid auditory recognition, spatial memory, and motor coordination. Within this culturally structured practice environment, the study investigates whether long-term, consistent training can facilitate the emergence of grapheme-color and/or sound-color synesthesia.

In Competitive Karuta, players are tasked with memorizing the spatial arrangement of cards and quickly identifying and touching cards that correspond to recited poems. This practice involves long-term exposure to consistent auditory, visual, and linguistic stimuli under conditions of high attentional demand. A questionnaire survey was followed by screening tests, which revealed 11 self-reported synesthetes, confirmed through consistency measures. We examined whether the distribution of synesthetic colors showed clustering in color space, as reported in prior studies on innate synesthesia. The findings revealed that both visually presented and auditorily recited stimuli prompted synesthetic colors that formed systematic clusters. The distribution patterns observed in this study closely align with those documented in previous research on innate synesthesia, demonstrating a high degree of consistency. These findings collectively indicate that synesthetic associations developed through extensive training can attain a level of structural stability that is comparable to that found in innate synesthesia.

The findings indicate that, at least for specific stimuli, synesthetic associations may develop through experience rather than being solely attributable to innate predispositions. More broadly, this study emphasizes how culturally embedded expertise and repeated perceptual practice can influence cross-modal perception.

Eric Wu

Why is popular music popular socially?: A Case Study from China

Over the past several decades, a cultural phenomenon has emerged and developed. Listeners in China prefer to engage with popular music "flavored" with traditional music elements rather than more traditional Chinese music, even though listeners generally have easy access to both types of music. My research involves critical musical analyses of songs that incorporate traditional musical elements and that are currently popular in China. I accessed recordings found on bilibili.com, one of the most prevailing video and music sites in China, as the primary data source. The analyses identified the existence of different categories of popular music with traditional elements. Familiarity with certain traditional elements within songs may cause listeners to have preferences for certain categories of popular music. In addition, their preferences may be potentially explained by changes in government administrations. This research has its significance in providing information related to the current state of the popular music consumption in China. It lays a foundation for future research trajectories.

Grace Smith

Time in Textiles

My research project, Time in Textiles, explored the intergenerational impacts of cultural estrangement and reconnection through traditional Turkish textiles and stop-motion animation in the creation of the film The Heart is Woven. I am inspired by my grandmother's practice of sewing and mending fabrics, symbolizing resilience, repair, and memory preservation. The project reflects on my personal journey of reconnecting with my family and my heritage after 14 years of estrangement. Through abstract, dream-like stop-motion sequences, I visualize fragmented memories and emotions, juxtaposed with real audio narratives shared by my family in Adrasan, Türkiye. This juxtaposition investigates how cultural identity is inherited, lost, and reclaimed across generations. This method explores how material culture, like textiles, can embody these emotional landscapes and knowledge. The project engages with broader themes of repair, resilience, and belonging, using artistic methods to offer a thought-provoking exploration of how we mend gaps between past and present.

Jewel Fulmore

Challenging Linguistic Discrimination: Anti-Racist Writing Pedagogy in Undergraduate Writing Courses

Linguistic discrimination in higher education disproportionately affects Black students who speak African American Vernacular English and Black Language, particularly within writing assessment practices shaped by Standard Language Ideology. Traditional grading systems often position nonstandard dialects as improper or unacademic, reinforcing racialized hierarchies of language and contributing to inequitable experiences in undergraduate writing classrooms. These practices can negatively impact students' confidence, sense of belonging, and perceptions of academic success.

This study examines how undergraduate writing programs at the University of California, San Diego implement traditional versus alternative or anti-racist grading practices and how these approaches shape student experiences in writing courses. Survey data were collected from 27 undergraduate students who were enrolled in or had recently completed at least one UCSD writing course, as well as 15 writing instructional staff, including faculty, instructors, and teaching assistants, across eight undergraduate colleges. Student responses focused on academic success, writing confidence, linguistic comfort, and perceptions of fairness in grading, while instructional staff reflected on grading practices and instructional support.

Overall, findings indicate meaningful differences in how students experience writing courses depending on the grading structure. Students in courses using alternative or anti-racist grading practices generally reported more positive experiences related to learning, confidence, and linguistic safety than students in traditionally graded courses. At the same time, the findings highlight gaps between grading philosophy and classroom implementation, suggesting that grading structure alone does not guarantee equitable outcomes.

This study underscores the importance of institutional commitment and consistency in addressing linguistic discrimination in higher education and contributes to broader conversations about equitable writing assessment and linguistic justice.

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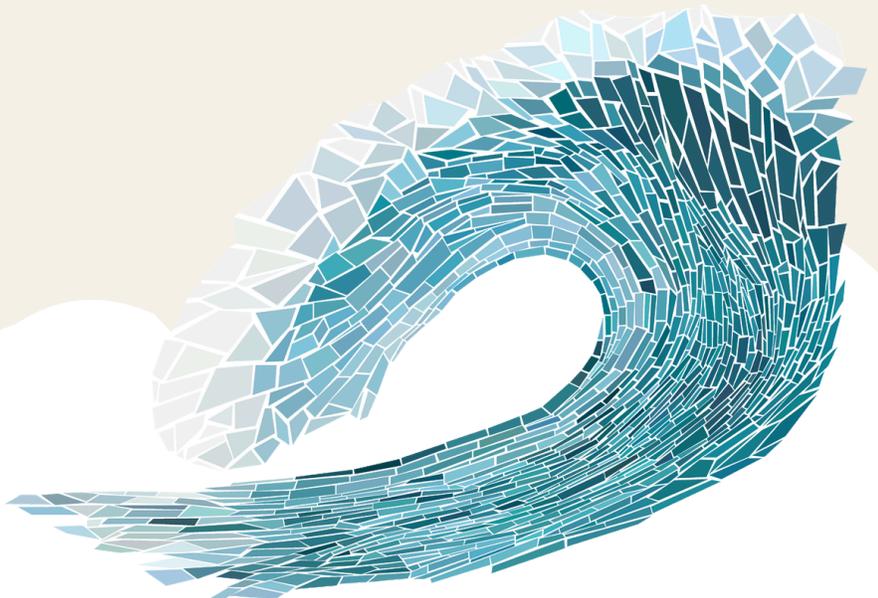
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