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Stress and College Students: A Multi-genre Research Project

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King, Katie, "Stress and College Students: A Multi-genre Research Project" (2016). *English Class Publications*. 46.
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Katie King

Jennifer Pittman

Composition II

5/2/2016

MGRE Introduction

The topic I have chosen to write about for my MGRE project is stress and its negative impact on the human body and academic performance. My solution to this problem discusses human-animal interaction as an effective way to relieve stress and improve academic success.

I had started out focusing on Ouachita faculty and staff as my target audience, and was planning on creating a PowerPoint for my framing device, as I thought about possibly presenting this to the Ouachita Planning Committee. However, I was having difficulty creating slides that effectively supported the notes I had made using information from my sources. So, I have now switched both my target audience and my framing device. Now I am targeting my fellow Ouachitonians and telling them how much stress is impacting their life without them realizing it, and how they should be seeking out animal interaction to help de-stress. To present this information, I have created a small newspaper with several “articles” that are paragraphs of a formal paper that have been split up to construct this newspaper. My thought process in choosing this framing device for this audience was that since we have a campus newspaper that some students already read, it could potentially be printed and scattered around for people to read and be inspired to do something to deal with their stress.

I am using a wide variety of sources for this project. For category A, I am using academic journal articles, and news articles. A pamphlet and advertisements from college dog therapy YouTube videos fulfill the category B requirements, and in category C I have a mixture of photographs. I also interviewed Dr. Dan Jarboe, the Ouachita campus counselor, about his views on stress, its effects on student life, and how he thinks having a therapy dog on campus would make a difference (which he thought it would be an amazing thing to have, as long as he didn't have to be responsible for taking the animal outside).

THE Scholarly Tiger



Bringing Campus Wide News from the Cliff to Speer

May 4, 2016

Bad Student or Just Stressed? Katie King

New Research Shows Stress Impacts Grades

It is easy to be stressed out. Between finances, exams, homework, and the sound of our alarm in the morning, the life of a college student is non-stop stress. While some of us might be bad students or have procrastination issues, research shows that stress may be part of why school is such a struggle.

A report released in 2015 by the American College Health Association included a list of things that students claim have a negative effect on their grades. Three of the top factors were anxiety (23.4%), depression (14.8%) and stress (32.5%). Other common factors include sickness (16.2%), and sleep difficulties (22.0%), which can be expected for college students who stay up late working on homework assignments (American College Health Association).

Also included in this report, is a list of things that students have claimed to have difficulty handling. 47% of students listed academics, along with finances (34.7%), relationships (30.9%), and sleep difficulties (29.8%). While many of these were common among students, 50.4% of individuals claimed to be having difficulty with multiple areas. Additionally, students often described feelings of hopelessness (49%), being overwhelmed or exhausted by their to do list (82-86%), and so stressed or depressed that they can't even get stuff done (35.3%) (American College Health Association). These statistics help put into perspective just how much of a role stress plays in the life of a college student.



(Psychology In Action)

Here at Ouachita, stress is very much a problem. According to campus counselor Dan Jarboe, the problem of student stress is very common, and that students tend to get busy and stay in their room by themselves all the time, weakening their social skills, and over thinking situations to the point where they can feel hopeless and overwhelmed. He says, "Having a more active lifestyle versus a sedentary one helps one's ability to cope with stress" (Jarboe).

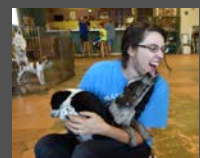
Did you know: Ouachita's Campus Activities Board works hard to put on events to give students an excuse to relax and break out of the dorm's four walls? Check out the "This Week @ Ouachita" emails for more info!

Also in This Issue:

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It's All About Chemistry: The Hormones Behind Stress



(American Psychological Association)

The two main hormones involved with stress are cortisol and oxytocin. Cortisol is a corticosteroid produced from cholesterol by the adrenal gland in the kidneys that is released to reduce stress by reducing inflammation. Additionally, cortisol raises blood glucose levels and poses a risk for Type

2 Diabetes. This is due to the constant state of high blood sugar, which causes the human body to be in demand for large levels of insulin to supply cells with glucose. However, when cortisol is being released, insulin cells are being worked against and cells are deprived of energy from glucose. Lack of energy can lead to overeating and weight gain. Additionally, high cortisol levels suppress the immune system, which explains why so many

people get sick during Tunes season or finals week between the sleepless nights and demanding schedules (Aronson). The second hormone attributed to stress is Oxytocin. Although it is commonly described as the "cuddle hormone", it offers a calming/relaxing feeling. Excitement of nerves in the hypothalamus stimulates release of oxytocin. This hormone has been found to be crucial in developing

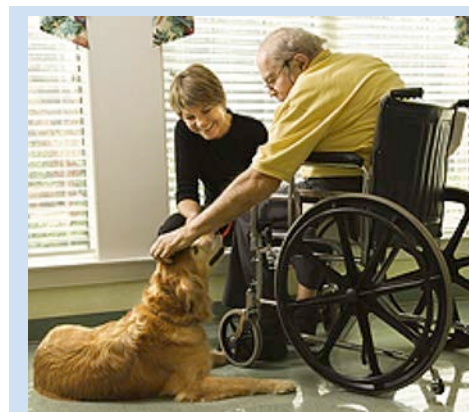
emotion. Oxytocin also inhibits the release of cortisol, and lowers blood pressure (McCardle, McCune & Griffin). Stress, along with these chemicals, causes tense muscles (as the muscles contract) as well as faster heart rate, stronger heart contractions, increased respiratory rate, and epinephrine release (APA). Although students may not realize it, stress has a huge impact on them, and it's not something to ignore.

Dr. Dog: Animals Act as Therapists

Studies show that Human-Animal interaction not only decreases cortisol levels in both humans and animals, but also increases oxytocin levels in humans. This means that petting a furry friend decreases stress, as well as makes you feel more calm and relaxed. Dogs are currently being used as means of therapy in many different areas such as hospitals, assisted living facilities, psychiatric wards, and prison. Those in nursing homes or assisted living atmospheres reported having increased mobility, positivity, verbalization and socialization. Additionally, in children; significant increase in behavior development, as well as quicker verbalization is found when a pet is in the home (because we all like to talk to our pets) (Barker and Wolen).



(Wiggs)



(Animal Behavior Institute)

Dog Videos & Chill?

A study conducted at the University of Maine took students them a questionnaire containing questions about their opinions on pets and their emotions and how calm or stressed they felt that day. The students were then placed in one of two groups; in one group, each person interacted with a yellow lab for five minutes, while those in the other group watched a five minute video with dogs. After the activity, participants in both groups took the same evaluation they did before the activity, and were debriefed to assess whether their mood/anxiety improved, stayed the same, or declined. The results indicated that those who interacted with the dog showed an improvement in mood positivity while those who watched the video stayed relatively the same. So while it may make you think you're doing good watching all those YouTube videos, it is actually better to go find a dog to pet (Picard).

Dogs Across the U.S.

Therapy dogs have become a part of life at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, UC Berkeley, Columbia University, Marquette, and dozens of more schools across the United States. In fact, at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, six dogs from a local dog therapy business take two hour shifts as students line up to spend ten minutes with a dog.

Students at Emory have claimed that after only ten minutes, they already feel less stressed, and some claiming that the break helped them focus, and study more effectively (Christensen).

Yale Law School made waves in 2011, when librarian Julian Aiken brought his trained therapy dog, Monty, to work. Not only has Monty's story inspired other schools like Harvard to develop similar therapy dog programs, but Yale now has two more dogs in their medical school library. In Arkansas, Hendrix University has a library dog named Duke that spends time with students (Xu). Although not all schools are able to implement permanent campus therapy dogs, many schools such as Baylor University dedicate entire

rooms so that dogs can visit with students during finals week. For those wondering about the legitimacy of the research between dogs and stress, Barbara from Hendrix says "A librarian in the academic setting would not think about bringing a therapy dog in if the research wasn't there" (H. University). If therapy dogs fit well at Hendrix, Harvard and Yale, they would fit here at Ouachita too!



(Christensen)

Ouachita is a Dog Friendly Campus

Have you ever wished that your dog could come live with you in your dorm room? Although it is true that dogs can act as emotional support or service animals, having them in dorm rooms is just not practical. Funds would have to be dedicated to maintaining dorm cleanliness, and keeping grassy areas sanitary. Additionally, students would have to make sure to manage their time well enough to feed their pets, and take them outside throughout the day. Even though our pets may not be able to live with us, that doesn't mean that we have to cut dogs out of our lives completely as college students!

As a matter of fact, Ouachita professors commonly bring their dogs to their offices, or walk them on campus in the evening. Additionally, there is ability to "Adopt a puppy for the day" from the Clark County Humane Society!

Clark County Society Seeking Dog Walkers: What You Can Do to Help the Cutest Orphans Around

Have you ever been walking around campus and seen a dog and wondered where it came from? Chances are, it's one of the Humane Society dogs!

The Humane Society of Clark County is located at 627 Walnut Street, and is open Monday – Friday from 10am - 4pm and Saturday from 10am - 2pm. If you head 6th Street go straight through the stop sign, and drive past the post office, you'll find them on the left right after the curve by the train station.

Upon entering the building, you'll notice and cats, puppies and small dogs inside.

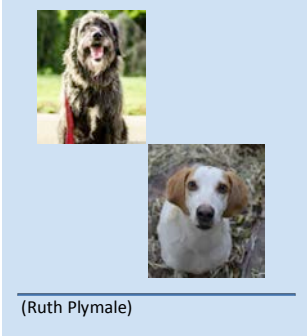
However, there are many other medium to large size dogs in the yard behind the building. Jesse, the man in charge, is always more than happy to let you bring one to campus as long as they are returned by closing time! It's free of charge, and helps the Humane Society because the dogs have to get exercise somehow! Your help not only helps the dogs, but also helps Jesse.

Don't want to bring it to campus? It's just as fun to chill with the dogs there! Wear some clothes you don't mind getting dirty, and go pet some fuzzy buddies!



(Katie King)

Dogs of Ouachita



(Ruth Plymale)

Dr. Plymale, Sophie & Henry

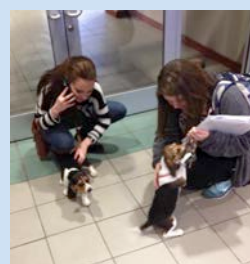
Dr. Ruth Plymale is the owner of Sophie and Henry, who both came from the Humane Society. While Dr. Plymale often brings them to campus on walks, they are not allowed in buildings because they are too rambunctious.



(Katie Dreher)

Dr. Hensley's Maggie

New to the Hensley family is little Maggie. For the past couple weeks, she has been a visitor to the Anatomy & Physiology class, and will most likely be on campus frequently as she grows.



(Jess Kelly)

Daisy & Bandit Kelly

Daisy & Bandit love to come to campus to help students relax. They live close to campus with their owner, Dr. Jess Kelly, and love to play in the grass behind JSC.



(Wesley Kluck)

Prof. Eurich & Pepper

Professor Tiffany Eurich commonly brings her dog Pepper to spend time in her office. Pepper's favorite thing to do is sleep under the desk, and she is so quiet that students often have no clue that she's there.

How to: Become a Certified Therapy Dog

1. Be a dog
2. Learn 90 commands including sit, lie down and stay
3. Conquer nervousness and master control of a variety of stressful situations
4. Take liscensing exam from Therapy Dogs International
5. Recieve tummy rubs all day long

A Letter from the Editor:

Dear Students, Faculty & Staff of Ouachita Baptist University,

As articles in this issue of the Scholarly Tiger explain, stress effects the lives of students and teachers alike due to the demanding things that pile up in a school setting. This stress does not only make us more hurried, grumpy, and tired, but it is also taking a much bigger toll on our health physiologically as well as mentally. Please do not ignore stress, but rather take the time to decompress.

Students – Consider making dog therapy a regular relaxing time in your schedules. I personally go to the Clark County Humane Society some afternoons, and usually end up sitting in the floor for at least an hour with a dog. I leave with a full heart because I love animals so much, but I also leave relaxed and ready to carry on with business back at school.

Faculty – please consider making dog therapy a permanent addition to Ouachita's campus. The evidence presented here is barely a sprinkling of all the information about animals and how they benefit humans, as well as how effective therapy animals have been in many settings, including college campuses. All it takes is someone willing to bring a dog to campus, as well as a few individuals (such as student workers) to help tend to the animal while on campus and in buildings. It is not expensive, and the presence of having an animal on campus would bring a new dynamic that I feel many would embrace.

"There's no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face" – Ben Williams

Sincerely,

Katie King

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