

# Jessica S. Leffers, Ph. D.

Assistant Professor of Psychology, St. Mary's College of Maryland

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## EDUCATION

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- 2018-2021      Ph. D. in Experimental Psychology, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts
- 2016-2018      M.S. in Psychology, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts
- 2012-2016      B.A. in Psychology, *Magna Cum Laude*, Honors in Psychology. Minors in Education and Cognitive Studies, Goucher College, Baltimore, Maryland

## TEACHING

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- 2024 –            Assistant Professor of Psychology, Department of Psychology, St. Mary's College of Maryland  
*Courses: Lifespan Development, Scientific Writing & Professional Development, Special Topics in Developmental Psychology*
- 2021-2024      Assistant Professor of Psychology, Behavioral Sciences Collegium, Eckerd College  
*Courses: Introduction to Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Human Cognition, Research Methods I, Psychology of Decision-Making, Cross-Cultural Psychology, Memory in the Movies, Psychology & Statehood in Puerto Rico*
- 2019, 2020      Instructor of Record, Honors Program, Northeastern University,  
*Course: Honors Discovery*
- 2019              Instructor of Record, Department of Psychology, Northeastern University  
*Course: Lab in Cognition*
- 2016-present    Graduate Teaching Assistant, Department of Psychology, Northeastern University,  
*Courses: Lab in Cognition, Lab in Developmental Psychology, Lab in Research and Design, Introduction to Psychology*

2014-2016 Supplemental Instructor, Department of Psychology, Goucher College  
*Courses: Sensation and Perception, Statistical Methods in Psychology*

## **MENTORING**

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2022-2024 Ford Research Scholar Sponsor, Eckerd College (student-led project)  
 2021-2024 Academic Mentor, Eckerd College (approx. 40 mentees/year)  
 2016-2021 Research Assistant Supervisor, CORE Lab, Northeastern University (NU)  
 2020- Honors Project Advisor, Alec Rutherford & Lauryn Lu, NU  
 2019-2020 Independent Project Advisor, Luc Hernandez, NU  
 2018-2019 Independent Project Advisor, Kaila Atkins, NU

## **RESEARCH EXPERIENCE**

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2024 - Principal Investigator, Leffers Lab, St. Mary's College of Maryland  
 2021-2024 Principal Investigator, Categorization and Reasoning (CAR) Lab, Eckerd College (5-7 UG RAs/semester)  
 2016 - 2021 Graduate Research Assistant, Conceptual Organization, Reasoning, and Education Lab, Department of Psychology, Northeastern University. PI: John D. Coley, Ph.D.  
 2019 Visiting Graduate Student Researcher, Queen's University Belfast, School of Psychology, Belfast, UK. PI: Aidan Feeney, PhD.  
 2014-2016 Research and Data Assistant, Behavioral Pharmacology Research Unit, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, PI: Matthew Johnson, Ph.D.  
 2015-2016 Research Assistant, Attention and Perception Lab, Department of Psychology, Goucher College, PI: Thomas Ghirardelli, Ph.D.  
 2013-2015 Research Assistant, Positive Psychology Lab, Department of Psychology, Goucher College. PI: Ann McKim, Ph.D.

## **PROFESSIONAL SERVICE**

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2023-2024 Eckerd College AAUP Chapter Secretary  
 2022 Neuroscience Search Committee for Psychology Discipline, Eckerd College  
 2022-2024 Faculty Observer to the Board of Trustee's Academic Affairs Committee, Eckerd College  
 2022-2024 Intercollegiate Athletic Committee, Eckerd College  
 2022-2024 SEA-change Committee, Eckerd College

2022	Reviewer for Journal of Experimental Child Psychology
2021-2022	Developmental Search Committee for Psychology Discipline, Eckerd College
2021	Health Search Committee for Psychology Discipline, Eckerd College
2021-2024	Psi Chi Chapter Co-Advisor, Eckerd College
2021-	Boston University Center for Antiracist Research Affiliate
2020-2021	Graduate Student Representative for Departmental Faculty Search Committee, Northeastern University
2018-2020	Graduate Student Representative for Psychology Department, Northeastern University
2020	Reviewer for JARMAC Special Issue on Culture & Memory
2019	Graduate Student Council Psychology Representative, Northeastern University
2018	Reviewer for Northeastern University's Dissertation Completion Grant
2017-2021	Community Volunteer with South End Soccer

## **AWARDS AND HONORS**

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2023-2024	Eckerd College St. Pete Center Fellowship (\$2500)
2022	Faculty Sponsor for FORD Fellowship, Eckerd College
2021	Dean's Award for Excellence in Teaching, Northeastern University (\$500)
2016-2021	Northeastern Graduate Research/Teaching Assistantship
2019	SRCD Student Poster Award Finalist
2017,18,19	College of Science (Northeastern) Travel Award (\$500)
2017,18,19, 20	PhD Network (Northeastern) Travel Award (\$500)
2018	Northeastern Dissertation Research Grant (\$1500)
2014	Psi Chi Honor Society
2013-2016	Dean's List at Goucher College
2012-2016	Global Citizens Scholarship Recipient
2015	Chi Alpha Sigma Athlete Honor Society
2015	Goucher Intern Fellowship Recipient (\$2000)
2012- 2015	Landmark Conference Honor Roll
2012	Goucher Freshmen Interdisciplinary Science Honor Society

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS**

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Society for Research in Child Development  
 Psychonomic Society  
 Eastern Psychological Association  
 Association for Psychological Science

Cognitive Development Society  
 Cognitive Science Society  
 Northeastern Evolutionary Psychology Society

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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<sup>a</sup>indicates undergraduate mentee

Nielson, C., Pitt, E., Fux, M., de Nesnera, K., Betz, N., **Leffers, J. S.**, Tanner, K.D. & Coley, J. D. (under review). Spontaneous anthropocentric language use in university students' explanations of biological concepts predicts misconception agreement. *CBE- Life Sciences Education*.

McMullen, K.M., Ecker, A., **Leffers, J.S.**, Nicole Betz & Wormwood, J.B. (R&R). Categorization processes in emotion expression recognition: The role of language and essentialism. *Emotion*.

**Leffers, J. S.** & Coley, J.D. (2021). Do I know you? The role of culture in racial essentialism and facial recognition memory. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*.

Feeney, A., Dautel, J. D., Phillips, K., **Leffers, J.S.**, & Coley, J. (2020). The development of essentialist, ethnic and civic intuitions about national categories. *Advances in Child Development and Behavior*, 59, 95-131.

Betz, N., **Leffers, J. S.**, Dahlgard Thor, E.E., Fux, M., de Nesnera, K., Tanner, K.D. & Coley, J.D. (2019). Evidence of Cognitive Construals in Undergraduate Biology Instructional Language. *CBE- Life Sciences Education*, 18(4).

## **Manuscripts in Preparation**

<sup>a</sup>Lu, L., Rutherford, A., **Leffers, J. S.**, & Coley, J. D. (currently revising). Outgroup Racial Essentialism Predicts Outgroup Social Comfort. *Rejected by Social Cognition*.

**Leffers, J.** & Coley, J.D. (in prep). Evidence for two-dimensional approach to psychological essentialism.

## **ORAL PRESENTATIONS**

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<sup>a</sup>indicates undergraduate mentee \*cancelled due to Covid-19 pandemic

**Leffers, J.** & Coley, J. D. (2020). *Downstream consequences of racial essentialism: Facial recognition memory*. Oral Presentation given as Invited Speaker at Child Cognition Lab, Boston University. (September).

- \*Leffers, J.,** Betz, N., Wormwood, J. and Coley, J.D. (2020). *Top-down effects of essentialist beliefs on facial recognition memory*. Oral presentation accepted for the annual meeting of the Association for Psychological Science (May).
- Leffers, J. & Coley, J.D.** (2020). *Relations between racial essentialism and facial recognition memory in children*. Oral Presentation given as Invited Speaker at Queen's University Psychology Department (February).
- Leffers, J. & Coley, J.D.** (2019). *Essentialist beliefs about racial outgroups predict the Own-Race Bias in facial recognition*. Oral Presentation given at the International Convention for Psychological Science, Paris, France (March).
- Betz, N., **Leffers, J.,** Ganguly, P., & Coley, J.D. (2019). *Cultural Variation in Social Essentialism: an investigation into the effects of cultural collectivism on essentialist thinking and its consequences*. Oral Presentation given at the International Convention for Psychological Science, Paris, France (March).
- Feeney, A., **Leffers, J.,** Gottfried, J., & Coley, J.D. (2019). *A cross cultural study of relations between essentialist beliefs and judgments from faces of membership in the categories Catholic and Protestant*. Oral Presentation given at the International Convention for Psychological Science, Paris, France (March).
- Leffers, J. & Coley, J.D.** (2018). *A\*Leffers, J., Betz, N., Wormwood, J. and Coley, J.D. (2020). Top-down effects of essentialist beliefs on facial recognition memory*. Oral presentation accepted for the annual meeting of the Association for Psychological Science (May).
- re race conceptions related to the own-race bias?* Oral Presentation given at Northeastern University Psychology Club (April).
- Leffers, J. & Coley, J. D.** (2018). *Relations between Racial Essentialism and Facial Recognition*. Oral Presentation given as Invited Speaker at Child Cognition Lab, Boston University (March).
- Leffers, J. & Coley, J. D.** (2018). *Relations between Racial Essentialism and Facial Recognition*. Oral Defense for Psychology Department Master's Convention, Northeastern University (March).
- Leffers, J.,** Fux, M., <sup>a</sup>Pitt, M., <sup>a</sup>Douglas, E., <sup>a</sup>Hut, K., <sup>a</sup>Luken, A., Wilkins, H., & Coley, J.D. (2017). *Cheetahs, Penguins and Salamanders, Oh My! Intuitive Thinking and Formal Biology Education: The Case of Evolution*. Oral Presentation given at 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Northeastern Evolutionary Psychology Society Conference, Binghamton NY (June).
- Coley, J.D., Betz, N., Xu, Y., **Leffers, J.,** de Nesnera, K., & Tanner, K.D. (2017). *Relations Between Intuitive Biological Thought and Scientific Misconceptions in Undergraduate*

*Biology Majors and Non-Majors*. Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Austin TX (April).

## POSTER PRESENTATIONS

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<sup>a</sup>indicates undergraduate mentee

Blanchard, L. <sup>a</sup>, Barrentine, G. <sup>a</sup>, Berglund, L. <sup>a</sup>, Montes de Oca, C. <sup>a</sup>, McCune, M. <sup>a</sup>, Drummond, K. <sup>a</sup>, Gionfriddo<sup>a</sup>, S. & **Leffers, J.S.** (2024). Poster presentation given at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association.

Kiss, A. <sup>a</sup>, Barrentine, G. <sup>a</sup>, London, Z. <sup>a</sup>, Bransford, T. & **Leffers, J.S.** (2024). To Splat or Not to Splat? Investigating anthropic thinking in college students. Poster presentation given at the annual meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association.

**Leffers, J.S.** (2023). Poster presentation given at the annual meeting for the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC (August).

**Leffers, J. S.** and Coley, J. D. The relationship between racial essentialism and inhibitory control. (2022). Poster presentation given at the annual meeting for the Association of Psychological Science, Chicago, IL (May).

Lu, L., Rutherford, A., **Leffers, J. S.**, & Coley, J. D. (2022). Outgroup Racial Essentialism Predicts Outgroup Social Comfort. Poster presentation given at the annual meeting for the Association of Psychological Science, Chicago, IL (May).

Nielson, C., Pitt, E., Fux, M., **Leffers, J. S.** & Coley, J. D. (2022). All about humans? Anthropocentrism, but not essentialism or teleology relation to misconceptions and expertise across biological concepts. Poster presentation given at the annual meeting for the Association of Psychological Science, Chicago, IL (May).

**Leffers, J.**, <sup>a</sup>Rutherford, A., <sup>a</sup>Atkins, K., <sup>a</sup>Bisson, J., and Coley, J.D. (2019). Children's racial essentialism predicts facial recognition memory. Poster presented at Cognitive Development Society Annual Meeting in Louisville, KY (October).

**Leffers, J.**, <sup>a</sup>Strella, S., Potts-Santone, M.S., & Coley, J.D. (2019). *Relations between intuitive thinking and evolutionary understanding in 8th graders and undergraduates*. Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Baltimore, MD (March).

Betz, N., **Leffers, J.**, Ganguly, P., & Coley, J.D. (2019). *Psychological essentialism negatively predicts dehumanization of outgroups: evidence from India*. Poster presented at the International Convention for Psychological Science, Paris, France (March).

- Leffers, J.** and Coley, J.D. (2018). *Essentialist Thinking about Outgroups Predicts Own-Race Bias*. Poster presented at the 59th Psychonomic Society Annual Meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana (November).
- Fux, M., de Nesnara, K., Xu, Y., Betz, N., **Leffers, J.**, Tanner, K & Coley, J.D. (2018). *Demonstrating Contingency between Intuitive Biological Reasoning and Perpetual Biological Misconceptions across Levels of Academic Expertise*. Poster session presented at the 30th Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science, San Francisco, CA (May).
- Betz, N., **Leffers, J.**, Dahlgaard Thor, Emily E., Fux, M., de Nesnara, K., Tanner, K & Coley, J.D. (2018). *Intuitive Instruction: Evidence of Anthropocentric, Teleological and Essentialist Language in Instructor Lectures during Undergraduate Biology Courses*. Poster presented at the 30th Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science, San Francisco, California (May).
- Leffers, J.**, <sup>a</sup>Atkins, K., <sup>a</sup>Chan, A., <sup>a</sup>Govan, T., <sup>a</sup>Strella, S. Coley, J.D. (2018). *Learning through the Intuitive Lens: Relations between Evolutionary Understanding and Intuitive Thinking in Undergraduates and 8th graders*. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association in Philadelphia, PA (March).
- Leffers, J.**, <sup>a</sup>Coats, S., <sup>a</sup>Govan, T., <sup>a</sup>Kim, E., <sup>a</sup>Pitt, E., Coley, J.D. (2017). *Relations Between Racial Essentialism and Facial Recognition*. Poster presented at the 58th Annual Psychonomic Society Meeting, Vancouver (November).
- Coley, J.D., Betz, N., **Leffers, J.**, Xu, Y., Fux, M., de Nesnara, K., & Tanner, K.D. (2017). *Relations Between Intuitive Biological Thought and Scientific Misconceptions*. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Cognitive Science Society, London (July).
- Leffers, J.**, <sup>a</sup>Douglas, E., <sup>a</sup>Hut, K., <sup>a</sup>Luken, A., <sup>a</sup>Pitt, M., <sup>a</sup>Wilkins, H., & Coley, J.D. (2017). *Relations between intuitive thinking and evolutionary understanding: Cheetahs, Penguins, and Salamanders, oh my!* Poster presented at the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science, Boston MA (May).
- Leffers, J.**, <sup>a</sup>Alto, A., <sup>a</sup>Douglas, E., <sup>a</sup>Hut, K., <sup>a</sup>Luken, A., <sup>a</sup>Wilkins, H., & Coley, J.D. (2017). *Relations Between Intuitive Thinking and Evolutionary Understanding in Middle Schoolers*. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, Boston MA (March).
- Ghirardelli, T., Jones, A., Werkheiser, A., Dunn, K., Goffi, E., Goldrich, S., Monthie, K., **Leffers, J.**, Fuller, G., Kolb, E., and Moore, A. (2017). *Are Meaningful Letter Strings Processed like Sentences in the RSVP?* Poster presented at Eastern Psychological Association's Annual Meeting, Boston MA (March).
- Mckim, A., Anderson, N., Ehrentreu, D., **Leffers, J.**, Bower, K., Byler, B., Fisher, B., Weih, H. (2015). *From Dismal to Delightful: The Effects of Feng Shui and Grapefruit on Mood*

*and Energy*. Poster presented at Eastern Psychological Association's Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA (March).