

Avital Pelakh

📍 Pittsburgh, PA ✉ AVP36@pitt.edu ☎ (406) 579-5714 🌐 apelakh.github.io

SUMMARY

Experimental researcher with training in cognitive science and advanced quantitative analysis; Experience working with multidisciplinary teams and communicating complex findings to technical and non-technical audiences.

Research areas/Expertise: learning; reasoning; problem solving; motivation

EDUCATION

PhD	Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, Cognitive Psychology <i>Minor in Quantitative Methodology</i>	Expected 2026
MS	Learning Research and Development Center, University of Pittsburgh, Cognitive Psychology	2023
BS	Montana State University, Psychology	2020

HONORS AND AWARDS

Andrew W. Mellon Predoctoral Fellowship	2025-2026
Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences Graduate Fellowship	2020-2021
Lea Miller Memorial Psychology Scholarship	2019-2020
Robin Mason Memorial Scholarship	2019-2020
Undergraduate Scholars Program Funding Award	2019
Psi Chi International Honor Society in Psychology	2019
Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi	2019

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS (PEER REVIEWED)

*Wiley Top Viewed Article (2023)

Galla, B., Karanam, A., **Pelakh, A.**, & Goldberg, S. B. (2024). Adolescents do not benefit from universal school-based mindfulness interventions: a reanalysis of Dunning et al. (2022). *Frontiers in Psychology*.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1384531>

*Kalinowski, S. T., & **Pelakh, A.** (2023). A hypothetico-deductive theory of science and learning. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21892>

MANUSCRIPTS IN PREPARATION OR UNDER REVIEW

Pelakh, A., Good, M. L., Kuo, E., Tumminia, M., Jamal-Orozco, N., Adelman, A., Antoan, Jordann, Galla, Brian, & Nokes-Malach, T. J. (under review at *Physical Review – Physics Education Research*). *Thematic analysis of student perceptions of resources and demands experienced in introductory physics*. arXiv. <https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2502.14692>

Benson-Greenwald, T.M., **Pelakh, A.**, Tumminia, M.J., Jahanian, S., Diamond, M.S., Kuo, E., Good, M. Nokes-Malach, T.J. & Galla, B.M. (under revision). *Building courage, strength, and knowledge: Mindfulness training reduces psychological threat in introductory physics courses*. PsyArXiv. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/uq3v7>

Pelakh, A., Singh, C., Rottman, B., Nokes-Malach, T. (in prep). Unifying two threads of research on physics problem solving through their relation to a cognitive theory of insight.

Pelakh, A., Good, M. L., Kuo, E., Tumminia, M. J., Jahanian, S., Nokes-Malach, T., Galla, B. (in prep). Psychological threat and problem solving in physics: Relations and effects of mindfulness training as an intervention.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (EXTERNAL)

*Postbaccalaureate advisee; 5 first author, 10 total; Representative selection shown

*Langley, T., **Pelakh, A.**, Benson-Greenwald, T. M., Tumminia, M. J., Jahanian, S., Kuo, E., Galla, B. M., Nokes-Malach, T. (2023, November). *Does Mindfulness Promote Student Beliefs About Transfer?* Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the Psychonomic Society, San Francisco, CA.

Galla, B. M., Tumminia, M. J., **Pelakh, A.**, Jahanian, S., Good, M. Kuo, E., Nokes-Malach, T. (2023, February). *Can mindfulness training support college students' stress management, mental health, and engagement?* Poster presented at the annual conference of the International Society for Contemplative Research, San Diego, CA.

Pelakh, A., Good, M. L., Kuo, E., Tumminia, M. J., Jahanian, S., Nokes-Malach, T., Galla, B. (2022, November 19). Testing associations between mindfulness training, psychological threat, and perceptions of confidence, difficulty, and anxiety during problem solving. Talk presented at the 63rd Annual Meeting of the Psychonomic Society, Boston, MA.

Good, M.L., **Pelakh, A.,** Galla, B., Nokes-Malach, T., Tumminia, M. J., Hinshaw, K., Jahanian, S., Kuo, E. (2022, July 13-14). *Psychological Threat and Demands in an Introductory Physics Class*. Poster presented at the Physics Education Research Conference, Grand Rapids, MI.

Pelakh, A., Good, M. L., Kuo, E., Tumminia, M. J., Jahanian, S., Nokes-Malach, T., Galla, B. (2022, April 4-5). *Examining associations between stress appraisals, problem categorization, and solution times in undergraduate physics students*. Poster presented at the Center for Integrative Research on Cognition, Learning, and Education Conference, St. Louis, MO.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (INTERNAL)

8 first author, 9 total; Representative selection shown

Pelakh, A. (2024, October). A case study in experiment refinement: Identifying effects of mindfulness training on motivation and engagement in introductory physics. Talk presented at the Cognitive Talks Series, Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh.

Pelakh, A. (2024, March). *Creating dynamic data visualizations with Shiny in R*. Talk presented at the CAMEL (Community for Advanced Methodological Learning) Talks Series, Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh.

Pelakh, A. (2024, January). *A mixed-methods analysis of student experiences in introductory physics*. Talk presented at the Cognitive Talks Series, Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh.

Pelakh, A., Good, M., Kuo, E., Tumminia, M. J., Jahanian, S., Nokes-Malach, T., & Galla, B. (2023, November). *Investigating the relations between mindfulness training, psychological threat, and physics problem solving*. Poster presented at the Learning Research and Development Center Board of Visitors, Pittsburgh, PA.

Pelakh, A. (2023, March). Does mindfulness training affect students’ perceptions during problem solving? Results from a randomized controlled trial among undergraduate physics students reporting psychological threat. Talk presented at the Cognitive Talks Series, Department of Psychology, University of Pittsburgh.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Independent Research Contractor, Macmillan Learning	2023-2024
<i>Conducted in-person and virtual classroom observations; Qualitative ratings</i>	

TEACHING, MENTORING, AND ADVISING

Leader / Presenter	Introductory Statistics Workshop for LRDC Interns	2022, 2023, 2024
Teaching Assistant	PSY 422: Cognitive Psychology, University of Pittsburgh (250 students)	Spring 2023
Mentor / Advisor	University of Pittsburgh (10 students)	2020-2024
	<i>Post-Bac/Master’s students (2); Undergraduate Intern/RA (8)</i>	

SERVICE

University of Pittsburgh, Departmental		
Member	Cognitive Faculty Search Committee	2024
Psychology Rep.	Graduate Student Organization	2024
Member	Communications Committee	2022-Present
Student Coordinator	Cognitive Talks Series	2021

OTHER SKILLS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Programming Lang.	Advanced: R (dplyr, ggplot, Shiny, Quarto) Proficient: Python; HTML; CSS; JavaScript; SQL
Software and Dev. Env.	R Studio, Qualtrics, SPSS, Jupyter Notebook, GitHub, NVivo, Microsoft Office, MySQL Workbench, Docker, Adobe CC
Spoken Languages	English (native); Russian (fluent speaker)