

The Effect of Temperature on Self-Reported Isolation

Mary Holtzhauser

Advisor: Dr. Greg Elvers

Abstract

Embodied cognition is the idea that the human body influences thoughts. Physical heat should decrease loneliness while physical coolness should increase loneliness. Answering questions on an impersonal computer should increase loneliness reports relative to on paper. Preliminary results revealed a main effect of questionnaire type, no main effect of pack temperature and no interaction of questionnaire and pack temperature. Undergraduate students will be invited to complete a questionnaire identifying heat-seeking behaviors based on depression scores from previous testing.

Introduction

- Bargh and Shalev (2012) found that physical application of cold increased reports of loneliness
- Wong and Whitaker (1993) discovered that college students experience high levels of depression and dysphoria during their freshman year of college
- Hypotheses: (1) social warmth will be present with physical warmth, (2) using a socially cold method to record answers (computer) will override the effect of temperature, (3) students with depression should have more physical warmth-seeking behavior

References

- Bargh, J. A. & Shalev, I. (2012). The substitutability of physical and social warmth in daily life. *Emotion*, 12, 154-162. doi:10.1037/a0023527
- Russell, D.W. (1996). UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3): Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 66, 20-40. doi:10.1207/51327752jpa6601_2
- Wong, J.L. & Whitaker, D.J. (1993). Depressive mood states and their cognitive and personality correlates in college students: They improve over time. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 49, 615-621. doi: 10.1002/1097-4679(199309)49:5<615::AID-JCLP2270490503>3.0.CO;2-O

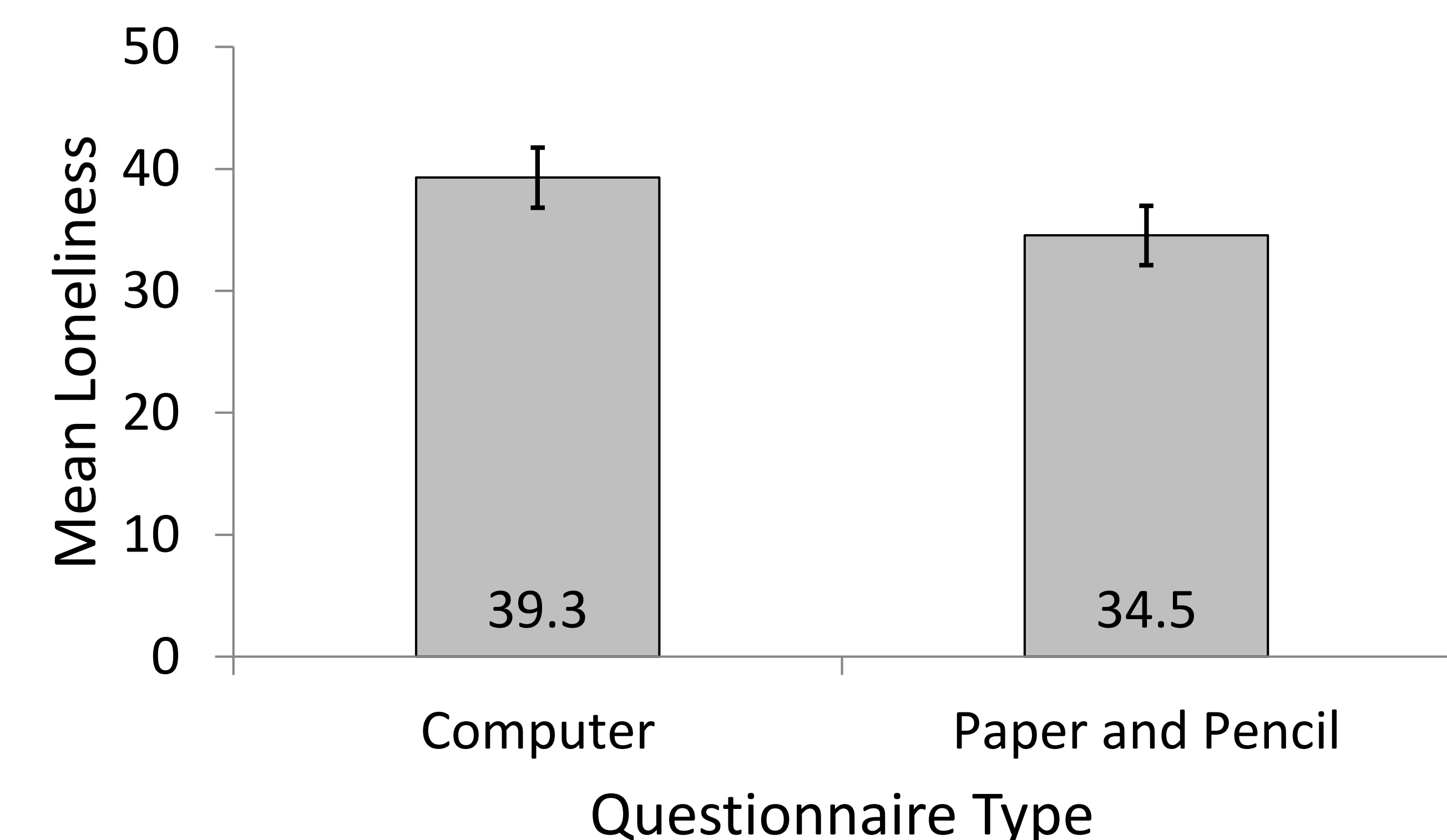
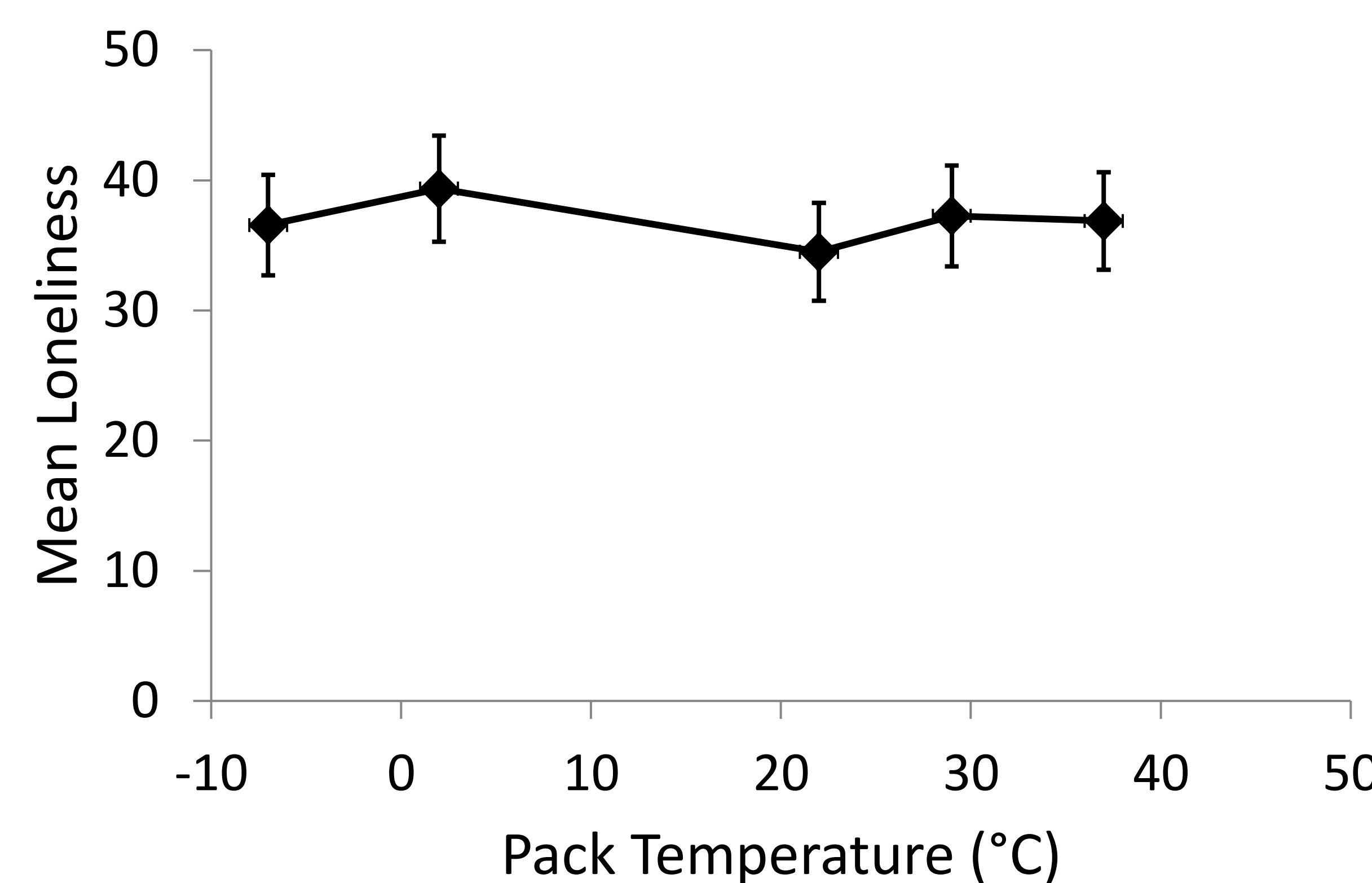


Method and Procedure

- 2x5 factorial, independent samples design
- Hold therapeutic pack at one of five temperature levels for one minute
- Paper & pencil vs computer administration of UCLA Loneliness Scale (Study 1)
- Heat-Seeking questionnaire (Study 2)

Results

- No main effect of pack temperature on average loneliness
- No interaction of pack temperature and questionnaire type
- Main effect of questionnaire type on loneliness



Discussion

- Results not very consistent with predictions
- Limitations: limited participant data, undergraduate depression
- Study 2 will collect data on depression and heat-seeking behaviors