

JOSHUA R. ORTEGA

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🔍 [Google Scholar Profile](#)

EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Psychological and Brain Sciences

2022 –

University of California, Santa Barbara

Research Area: Cognition, Perception, and Cognitive Neuroscience (CPCN)

Advisor: Jonathan Schooler, Ph.D.

B.A. in Economics, Minor in Sustainability

May 2020

Pepperdine University

GPA: 3.95, *Summa Cum Laude*

Dean's List – Spring & Fall 2017, Fall 2018, Spring & Fall 2019

PUBLICATIONS

Ortega, J. R., Gross, M. E., & Schooler, J. W. (2025). When life is but a dream: Does transliminality predict continuity of thought across the sleep-wake cycle? *Philosophy and the Mind Sciences*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.33735/phimisci.2025.10272>

Mrazek, A. J., Mrazek, M. D., Brown, C. S., Karimi, S. S., Ji, R. R., Ortega, J. R., Maul, A., Carr, P. C., Deleghard, A. M., & Kirk, A. C. (2022). Attention training improves the self-reported focus and emotional regulation of high school students. *Technology, Mind, and Behavior*, 3(4: Winter). <https://doi.org/10.1037/tmb0000092>

Mrazek, A. J., Mrazek, M. D., Ortega, J.R., Ji, R. R., Karimi, S. S., Brown, C. S., Alexander, C. A., et al. (2021). Teenagers' smartphone use during homework: An analysis of beliefs and behaviors around digital multitasking. *Education Sciences*, 11(11), 713. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/educsci11110713>

PRESENTATIONS

Ortega, J. R., Schooler, J.W., Gross, M.E. (2026, June 2). *Apophenia: A novel mechanism supporting creative cognition* [Poster presentation]. Annual Meeting of the Society for the Neuroscience of Creativity (SfNC), Philadelphia, PA.

Ortega, J. R., Gross, M.E., Schooler, J.W. (2026, April 25). *Atypical salience functioning predicts greater creativity and flourishing in everyday life* [Poster presentation]. California Well-being Conference (CaWBC), Riverside, CA.

Ortega, J. R., McGuinness, J.E., Schooler, J.W., Gross, M.E. (2025, November 22). *Diverging meaning-makers: Apophenia as a common cognitive basis for psychoticism and creativity* [Poster presentation]. Psychonomic Society 66th Annual Meeting, Denver, CO.

Ortega, J. R., Gross, M.E., Schooler, J.W. (2025, November 7). *Diverging meaning-makers: Apophenia separately predicts trait differences in psychoticism and creative performance* [Talk]. Cognition, Perception, and Cognitive Neuroscience (CPCN) area seminar, Santa Barbara, CA.

Ortega, J. R., Christensen, A.P., Gross, M.E., Schooler, J.W. (2024, May 31). *Abstract moments: A network approach to capturing states of openness* [Conference talk]. Psychological and Brain Sciences Mini-Con, Santa Barbara, CA.

Ortega, J. R., Gross, M.E., McGuinness, J.E., Schooler, J.W. (2024, February 10). *The virtuous cycle of creativity: Exploring the impact of art on cognitive judgements and divergent thinking* [[Poster presentation](#)]. Annual Convention of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), San Diego, CA.

Ortega, J. R., Gross, M.E., Schooler, J.W. (2023, March 24). *Intuitive, creative or transliminal? Crossing the threshold from intuition to convergent thinking* [[Poster presentation](#)]. Annual Meeting of the Society for the Neuroscience of Creativity (SfNC), San Francisco, CA.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Honorable Mention, NSF Graduate Research Fellowship	2024
Summa Cum Laude, Pepperdine University	2020
Blanche E. Seaver Faculty-Staff Scholarship, Pepperdine University	2019
Social Science Division Scholarship, Pepperdine University	2019
National Hispanic Scholar, College Board National Recognition Program	2015

TEACHING

Teaching Assistant 2022 –
University of California, Santa Barbara

Courses: *Mindfulness: Science and Practice (PSY 121)*, *Statistical Methods in Psychological and Brain Sciences (PSY 10B)*, *Advanced Research Methods (PSY 120L)*, *Consciousness and Cognition (PSY 120)*, *Introduction to Cognitive Psychology (PSY 108)*

MENTORSHIP AND SERVICE

Service

Access Grads: Mentor 2022 –
Advising underrepresented students seeking graduate school in psychology and neuroscience

Invited Panelist 2025
Speaker for “Grad School from A to Z” hosted by Center for Science and Engineering Partnerships (CSEP)

Invited Panelist 2024
Speaker for “Navigating Higher Education as a First-Generation College Student”

Graduate Student Panelist 2024
Speaker for “Sneak Peek” recruitment event hosted by committee for diversity, equity, and inclusion

Mentorship

Current Mentees

Aidan Christie
Slavyana Panayotova
Kai Walsh

Past Mentees

Jacqueline McGuinness
Citlali Ibarra
Hana Ibarra
Noa Kedmy
Yusra Al-Alawai
Alexandra Parker

Latest position

Lab technician with Dr. Jonathan Schooler, UCSB
Masters of Social Work at Columbia University
Intern with Dr. Wendy Barry Mendes, Yale
Master of Social Work at UCLA
Masters in Clinical Psychology at CU Colorado Springs

ARTISTIC PUBLICATIONS

Joshua R. Ortega. “Let Me Take You Down”. *Camas Magazine*, Summer 2022, p. 8.