

**Name: Russell J. Webster**

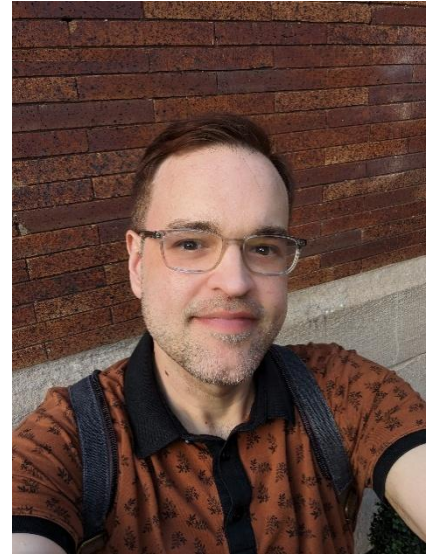
**Institutional affiliation: Penn State Abington College**

**Area of specialization: Social/Personality Psychology**

**Website: <https://www.abington.psu.edu/russell-webster>**

**Brief (1 paragraph) summary of professional interests:**

My research program focuses on two broad questions: (1) Why can't human beings get along? And (2) How do people cope with a chaotic and stressful world? To help answer these questions, I examine how the person and the situation contribute to (1) intergroup bias (my primary research line) and (2) magical thinking (my secondary research line), respectively. Since earning my Ph.D. in 2012, most of my work has focused on individual differences in belief in pure evil and belief in pure good. In my teaching, given how much contemporary forms of media propagate misinformation, my overarching pedagogical goal is to create more informed stewards and better consumers of behavioral science. I have taught introductory statistics over 20 times, along with personality psychology, social psychology, and research methods, along with upper-level seminar courses on the psychology of evil, human sexuality, and alcohol.



**Education:**

Ph.D., Social/Personality Psychology, Kansas State University (2012)

M.A., Cognitive and Social Processes, Ball State University (2006)

B.A., Psychology and French (2004)

**Representative publications (no more than five), ordered chronologically:**

1. **Webster, R. J.**, Weisberg, D., & Saucier, D. A. (in press). From Hobbits to Harry Potter: A psychological perspective on fantasy. *Imagination, Cognition, and Personality* (Special Issue: "Engaging the Unreal"). <https://doi.org/10.1177/02762366251320601>
  2. \*§Vasturia, D., §**Webster, R. J.**, & Saucier, D. A. (2018). Demons with firepower: How belief in pure evil relates to perceptions and evaluations of gun violence perpetrators. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 122, 13-18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.09.037>
  3. **Webster, R. J.**, \*Burns, M. D., \*Pickering, M., & Saucier, D. A. (2014). The suppression and justification of prejudice as a function of political orientation. *European Journal of Personality*, 28, 44-59. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.1896>
  4. \*§Fluke, S., §**Webster, R. J.**, & Saucier, D. A. (2014). Methodological and theoretical improvements in the study of superstitious beliefs and behavior. *British Journal of Psychology*, 105, 102-126. [Early View Online Article] <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjop.12008>
  5. **Webster, R. J.**, & Saucier, D. A. (2013). Angels and demons are among us: Assessing individual differences in belief in pure evil and belief in pure good. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39, 1455-1470. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167213496282>
- \*Undergraduate co-author  
§Equal co-authorship

**Representative honors or awards (no more than five):**

- 2024 Fellow, Midwestern Psychological Association
- 2021 Outstanding Faculty Scholar Award, Nominated (by Faculty).
- 2017 Outstanding Faculty Advising/Mentoring Award, Nominated (by Students).

**Involvement in MPA:**

As an M.A. student, I presented at MPA for the first time back in 2006, almost 20 years ago! I returned to present in 2007 and 2008, including earning a Diversity Travel Award. Given limited funds as a PhD student and as then a visiting professor (for 3 years post-PhD), I focused on attending the major social/personality psych conference (SPSP) over the next 9 years.

In 2017, I gave an invited talk at MPA as an assistant professor (now at Penn State Abington), which helped boost my CV and make my push for promotion and tenure. I realized how much I missed MPA (and how much I missed Chicagoland, as I grew up in the suburbs); I recognized how special and valuable MPA is, especially as a forum for junior faculty – as well as grad students and undergraduates (given our special relationship with Psi Chi). MPA offers such a supportive and welcoming environment, while also making it much easier to give a paper talk at a conference.

Over for the past 8 years, I have been regularly involved in MPA, presenting in 2017, 2018, 2021, and 2024 (and, I will be giving a talk this April). I also moderated oral presentation sessions in 2017, 2018, 2020, 2023, and 2024 (and, I will moderating this April). I also serve as Penn State Abington's local representative. Most importantly, though, I served on the MPA's conference programming committee from 2023-2025. I am not exaggerating when I say I truly had so much fun getting the opportunity to review such a diverse array of abstracts each year, as well as embracing the challenge of arranging them all in cohesive sessions in the conference program.

Thus, after MPA 2025, my time on the conference programming committee ends. Although I live and work on the East Coast, I want to continue my contribution to MPA. I think MPA is one of the best regional conferences because we draw talented scholars from all across the country, not only the Midwest. Our connections with Psi Chi, STP (The Society for Teaching Psychology), and Society for Community Research and Action highlight our reach.

Thus, the next logical step for me was to run for MPA Council. I am truly excited to contribute to, essentially, MPA's governing board. MPA and the conference are both in strong positions post-pandemic; but, I would like to bring my perspective as a LGBTQIA+ and first-gen scholar, who also works at a primarily undergraduate institution (PUI), to MPA Council. I was grateful to receive MPA's Diversity Travel Award as a graduate student. I will work to maintain such efforts and looks for ways to further lift scholars from underrepresented, marginalized groups in our organization and in our conference programming, especially as anti-DEI efforts proliferate across our country.