

Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

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ABSTRACT

The current paper explores the relationship of displayed busyness to self-worth in the context of high school students, social media, and socially ingrained meritocratic beliefs; the notion that effort and merit will reap socioeconomic reward. This research examines if meritocratic beliefs correlate to self-worth evaluations through comparison to social media “hustle culture” videos (displays of busy, excessive workloads romanticized online) and if it differs by gender. Mixed-method data was collected through two online surveys, the second with a social media vignette to stimulate busyness comparisons. Correlational test results were compared between each survey to draw quantitative findings; open-ended responses were collected to dissect the thinking of participants; and all findings were triangulated. Analysis revealed no significant correlation in the overall sample ($n = 40$), but a significant, weak negative correlation in female students ($n = 23$): as school-based meritocratic beliefs increased, both overall and moral self-worth decreased. Further quantitative analysis indicated that busyness comparisons played a significant role in the correlation. Qualitative data analysis similarly showcased that more females noted constant striving for “success” as reasoning for associations of self-worth to busier schedules. These findings contribute to an understanding of prevalent meritocratic beliefs in U.S. high school environments, especially in demonstrating a stronger female correlation. Socializing MBs, online or in school, can therefore lower self-worth by positioning success and failure as an individual responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

We have it so ingrained in us that everything we do has to have [...] a productive outcome [...] you have to be constantly looking forward. (Burgess et al., 2022, p. 911)

“Hustle culture,” characterized by a romanticization of excessive and constant workloads wherein that “image of success” becomes the success itself, is increasingly pervasive for youth online (Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023). This phenomenon aligns with meritocratic beliefs (MBs) conceptualizing that an individual’s hard work, ability and/or merit will generate social success (Kim & Choi, 2017; Shane &

Heckhausen, 2017). However, MBs can associate failure with an individual's lack of effort (Fehr & Vollmann, 2025; Rauscher et al., 2023). Effort-based blame for an “individual” failure may cause lowered moral identity (McConnochie, 2024), reliance of self-worth (SW) on achievement (Davey, 2024), and judgement of assumed meritocratic systems as “fair” but the individual as “unworthy” (Waters & Leung, 2017). Nevertheless, MBs may be idolizing a displayed “image of effort” through busyness rather than the effort itself, like hustle culture online (Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023). Bellezza et al. (2017) found that within participants who believed in greater social mobility, greater perceptions of busyness signified greater socioeconomic status (SES). Because MBs can harm SW based on perceived individual effort, it is necessary to understand if culturally prevalent MBs harness busyness as the “image of effort”.

The current study seeks to understand if and how MBs correlate to SW in students – specifically by comparing one’s busyness to others online, a form of social comparison (Dempsey et al., 2022; Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023). The influence of busyness comparisons on self-worth is operationalized as busyness-based self-worth (BBSW). Additionally, since females face greater barriers (i.e. sexism) to the meritocratic ethos that success can be won through effort alone (Tedder-King & Sherf, 2024), the research examines how the correlation may differ across genders. This led to the creation of two research questions: 1) to what extent do MBs correlate to BBSW (Busyness-Based Self-Worth) derived from comparative social media post viewing in high school students; and 2) to what extent does gender influence this correlation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Meritocracy in America

A study from Zhu (2025) found that the U.S. population holds predominantly meritocratic beliefs: most Americans believe meritocratic factors like hard work were significantly more important for success than structuralist factors. Rauscher et al. (2024) showcases that this prevalence of MBs in the U.S. can also justify the social system itself, finding that those with higher MBs often assigned individual responsibility to a person’s (un)employment status. Beyond justifying failure as individual insufficiency to reinforce the social system, the findings of Fehr and Vollmann (2025) compound the theory of a positive feedback loop of MBs also within successful individuals: success leads to greater belief that said success was deserved because of hard work. The combined findings of Rauscher et al. (2024) and Fehr and Vollmann (2025) may suggest that, due to predominant MBs in America (Zhu, 2025), many Americans associate success or failure with an individual’s effort.

Furthermore, Belleza et al. (2017) reports that Americans believing in greater social mobility often associate perceived busyness with higher SES, suggesting that an American sociocultural influence like predominant MBs (Zhu, 2025) may be the cause. Importantly, busyness was only inferred by the perceived quantity of time a person spent working, not explicitly their effort (Bellezza et al., 2017). Yet, as MBs often associate one’s success/failure with individual effort (Rauscher et al., 2024; Fehr & Vollmann, 2025), the correlation of perceived busyness to social success suggests that busyness is

perceived as effort – especially for those believing in greater social advancement opportunities that MBs support (Bellezza et al., 2017). Thus, this study measures MBs to understand its influence in interpreting busyness and individual responsibility for it.

2.2 Morality Under Meritocracy

Though MBs are rooted in socioeconomic systems, literature points to an intermingling of MBs with morality. Distinguished psychologist Bernard Weiner spotlighted how perceptions of achievement-striving in society frame a moral responsibility for effort, in which one who is not effortful is regarded as “immoral” (Weiner, 1994). As MBs similarly invoke individual responsibility for effort (Rauscher et al., 2024), MBs may extend this moral lens to effort (Weiner, 1994). Indeed, the study of Amos et al. (2019) suggests how another American sociocultural norm valuing hard work (the Protestant Work Ethic; PWE) can act as a moral heuristic. Amos predicts that the PWE underlies assumptions of those in the study that one who is “hardworking” is more “moral”. MBs could hold a similar effect to the display of effort via busyness, considering that both sociocultural norms place an often-moralized value on individual effort (Weiner, 1994).

This proposed morality of MBs is often alluded to within qualitative literature. In a classroom for socioeconomically disadvantaged students, the teacher’s dissemination of MBs prompted students and families to adopt related moral identities; the immoral identity of “lazy” or the moral identity of “hard working” (McConnochie, 2024). MBs do not only influence the moral categorization of one’s effort as identity, however, but may deeply impact SW. Davey (2024) observes how MBs in low SES female students emphasized an individualized responsibility for effort in order to become successful “supergirls”. This caused the female students to blame themselves for and internalize academic failure while ignoring gendered and socioeconomic systemic barriers to success, only framing the academic outcome as resultant of their individual efforts or immoral lack thereof. This moral pressure the girls felt to put in more effort, or fail to prove themselves (Davey, 2024), aligns with the moralization of perceived efforts under MBs (Weiner, 1994), as does the moral judgements students made based off effort under MBs (McConnochie, 2024). Still, few quantitative studies take approaches to these moralized dimensions of MBs to draw correlations.

2.3 Socializing Meritocracy

MBs are socialized via two major areas within younger generations: education and social media. First, the global MB study of Zhu (2025) found that in the U.S. sample, the odds of having dual consciousness beliefs (recognizing both structural and merit factors) after 5 or more years of education dropped by 41% in favor of MBs. The qualitative literature similarly echoes the role of U.S. environments as fertile grounds for socializing MBs: both McConnochie (2024) and Davey (2024) recorded how MBs may have influenced a moralization of effort within school environments, referencing either the teacher’s or the general education system’s emphasis on personal responsibility for one’s future and/or success. As for social media, the aforementioned “hustle culture” online may demonstrate the spread of MBs over digital platforms – though it extends outside of online spaces (Burgess et al., 2022). This social pressure (whether on- or offline) romanticizes an individualized responsibility to be constantly “effortful”,

productive, and working (Burgess et al., 2022; Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023), thus aligning with the meritocratic ethos of effort (Davey, 2024). As more people share this ideal image of success and hard work over social media, youth can internalize the “image of success” as the success itself – that being the meritocratic emphasis on displays of constant work (Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023). Hustle culture, therefore, seemingly promotes busyness as an “image of effort”: associating a display of large quantities of time working (busyness) with effort (Bellezza et al., 2017; Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023).

After dissecting the moralized impacts MBs can hold when effort becomes associated with SW and morality (Weiner, 1994; Davey, 2024), it becomes vital to address the socialization of a potentially harmful and often unfulfilled belief in meritocracy – especially considering that major socialization hubs for MBs, educational institutions (McConnochie, 2024; Davey, 2024; Waters & Leung, 2017) and social media (Burgess et al., 2022; Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023), coincide with vulnerable young generations.

2.4 Measurements

In measuring MBs, the literature broadly defines them as belief in a meritocratic society (Kim & Choi, 2017). Zhu (2025), however, highlights that these measurements are often undistinguished and thus employs a multidimensional perspective to rectify the discrepancy. This study follows Zhu in employing multidimensional measurements of MBs adapted from three psychometrically validated studies across sociocultural contexts (Im & Shane, 2022; Zhu, 2025; Lei et al., 2021). The measure relies on three subscales and 10 dimensions of SES attainment beliefs from such studies (see Appendix B). The three subscales reflect how controllable a factor is by an individual to reflect associations of success/failure to individual effort (Rauscher et al., 2024) and the moral responsibility of such (Weiner, 1994); internal is the most individually determined (merit-based factors), external is the opposite, and mixed falls in between. To account for both the wider societal context of MBs and the school environment of students, the current study also draws on adapted school-centered MB statements (Darnon et al., 2019). Moreover, both moral and general self-esteem measures of SW were gathered to reflect the personal worth dimensions of MBs (Davey, 2024; McConnochie, 2024).

2.5 Gaps and Hypothesis

The current research primarily bridges an empirical gap in the MB literature between quantitative studies examining their impact on socioeconomic concepts/perceptions (i.e. Rauscher et al., 2023) and qualitative explorations of moral worth/identity (i.e. McConnochie, 2024). A mixed-method, psychosocial approach within this study can uncover if qualitative and quantitative findings may be bridged to create a comprehensive picture of MBs and morality. Still, papers taking a psychosocial approach hold crucial methodological gaps towards this study’s aim: Waters et al. (2017) is qualitative and takes few participants and Amos et al. (2019) does not methodologically integrate the moral heuristic of PWE to draw explicit correlations. Additionally, this study confronts the lack of SW impacts quantitatively measured yet alluded to by qualitative studies (i.e. Davey, 2024), often assessing only worth judgements of others (i.e. Amos et al., 2019; Rauscher et al., 2024). Additionally, the study will mend another methodological gap by analyzing the role of gender in these evaluations. Despite the presence of gendered systemic barriers in most settings, from the workplace to school, studies showcase a disregard for such

barriers to success by those with higher MBs who instead blame their lack of individual effort for failure (Tedder-King & Sherf, 2024; Davey, 2024). Thus, the researcher analyzes if the potential self-worth impacts of MBs may vary by gender due to this reframing of success as a factor of individual effort and not gendered systemic barriers (which females face more than males). The hypotheses are as follows: 1) as MBs increase, these individuals will attain lower BBSW if they see themselves as less busy than a displayed social media lifestyle post; and 2) female students will exhibit a stronger correlation in hypothesis 1 than males.

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This study aims to understand how MBs correlate to BBSW through viewing social media posts, alongside how gender influences these relationships. As supported by Dawadi et al. (2021), the study follows an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design which allows for quantitative correlational inferences, participants' qualitative reasoning, and greater understanding via triangulation. If all methodology steps are followed, the study is replicable for other researchers.

3.2 Participant Sample

The sample includes 40 students in their junior (third) year at a suburban Northeastern high school in the U.S. (Average age = 16.3; 58% female). The sample was majority white with a substantial Asian counterpart at 28% (see Figure 1 for full racial makeup of sample), mirroring the demographics of the total school district and validating the sample as accurately representative. See Appendix A for a full school-to-sample racial distribution comparison. The employment of purposive sampling in gathering participants ensured balanced gender demographics, controlled age levels, and a higher likelihood of a greater MB range. The latter stems from findings that most Americans hold higher MBs (Zhu, 2025), and thus a wider range of students increases chances of some holding lower MBs.

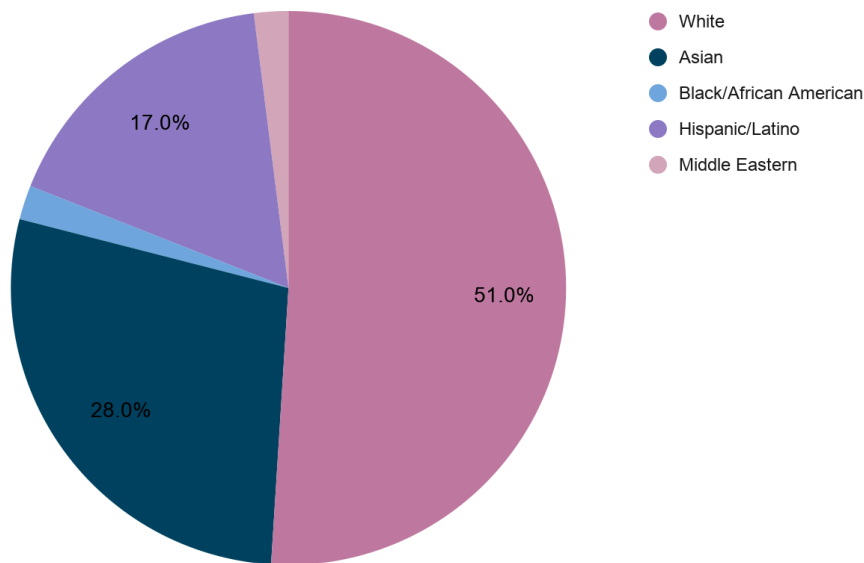


Figure 1: Racial distribution of student sample.

3.3 Measures

The preliminary survey included three sections: demographics, BSW, and MBs. The BSW section held two validated scales: self-alignment with 9 “moral traits” (Aquino & Reed, 2002) and agreement upon statements adapted from Heatherton and Polivy’s (1991) adapted state self-esteem scale (SSES) with 10 items removed and one added (see Table 1). MBs were quantified using 10 SES Attainment Belief items and school MB statements. All subsets are five-point Likert scales. See Appendix B for complete items and adaptations.

Adapted Item	Primary Factor
1. I feel confident in my abilities	Performance
2. I feel self-conscious (R)	Social
3. I feel as smart as others	Performance
4. I feel displeased with myself (R)	Social
5. I am worried about what others think of me (R)	Social
6. I feel confident that I understand things	Performance
7. I feel lesser than others at this moment (R)	Social

Adapted Item	Primary Factor
1. I feel confident in my abilities	Performance
8. I feel concerned about the impression I make on others (R)	Social
9. I feel like I'm not doing well (R)	Performance
10. I feel I have less ability right now than others (R)	Performance
11. I feel like I have not done enough (R)	Performance ^a

Table 1: Adapted state self esteem scale.

Note. R = reversed scoring (1 becomes 5; 2 becomes 3; etc).

^aItem 11 was constructed for this paper, focusing on busyness as a point of comparison.

The vignette for this study intends to replicate *TikTok* daily routine videos, with *TikTok* being a social media platform accessible to high school students. Systematic analysis and comparison of 36 “busy/productive day in my life posts” on *TikTok* helped indicate what elements to include in the study vignette, ensuring its validity and accuracy. Using *Canva*, the researcher created slideshow-format *TikTok* video replicas with photos sourced from Pinterest or iPhone screenshots. Identifying information or features which could incite bias (i.e. skin color, face, names, etc) was edited out of the vignette by placing black boxes over such. Two vignettes were created based on content variation observed between genders in the content. Stakeholder checking with 3 non-participating high school juniors confirmed vignette accuracy and believability (McInroy & Beer, 2021). See Appendix E for compressed video analysis chart and vignette development. Participants watched the vignette directly before completion of the in-person survey.

The in-person survey includes four parts: vignette accuracy and attention checks, relative busyness (RB), comparative self-worth (CSW), and open-ended responses. After vignette viewing, questions assessed participants’ attention, perceived believability, and familiarity to the video. RB was quantified via participants rating the vignette-student’s busyness versus their own on scales 1-10, with 1 being *not busy at all* and 10 being *extremely busy*. The preliminary BSW measures (moral traits and SSES) are reused twice in this survey with language adapted to the question context: once to evoke comparison by assessing the perceived SW of the vignette student, then for participant self-evaluation which quantifies CSW. Finally, open-ended responses allowed descriptions of and explanations for participants' imagined schedules if they held “very high self-worth”. See Appendix D for full survey information on all the above.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection began with distribution of consent forms to students and creation of a group chat for efficient communication. After participants handed in signed consent forms, the preliminary survey was sent to all. The schedule for in-person surveys followed reported participant availability, taking place in a classroom or the school library over the course of a month. Following a routine procedure for in-person surveys, the researcher first provided brief instructions, sent the vignette to participants based on gender, sent out surveys, and finally sent debrief messages individually upon completion. See Appendix C for the introduction and debrief messages. *Excel* charts store quantitative data, and *Word* documents hold open-ended responses. To maintain anonymity, a separate excel sheet holds a list encoding all participants' names only used to link pre- and post-vignette survey results. All files containing participant names were deleted following analysis completion.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

3.5.1 Quantitative Data: Using *Excel*, the researcher calculated composite values (BBSW, BSW, CSW) by averaging all item five-point Likert-scale scores and respective item amounts (moral traits, $n = 9$; SSES, $n = 11$). BBSW was quantified as CSW minus BSW, where negative values indicate decreased self-worth post-vignette viewing. All three composite measures also operated as individual scales for subdimensions of SW (moral/SSES BBSW) and as averages of both (BBSW). Refer to Table 2 for values and calculations. Research in this field often employs composite Likert-scale scores to measure variables and then use such to test correlations. Bellezza et al. (2017) implemented composite Likert-scale scores for measuring “perceived busyness” to quantify correlations, while Lei & Yu (2021) used regression analysis to predict the relationship of variables relating to MBs. Thus, this study implemented the non-parametric Spearman’s ρ test to examine possible correlations between the composite values of MBs and BBSW. To examine gender variations, the researcher ran individual Spearman’s ρ tests of MB-BBSW correlations for female and male participant data, allowing for descriptive comparisons of female versus male correlations.

Value	Calculation Employed
Societal MBs ^a	$\frac{\sum_{n=1}^x item_n}{x}$
School MBs	$\frac{\sum_{n=1}^3 statement_n}{3}$
BSW/CSW (moral)	$\frac{\sum_{n=1}^9 moralitem_n}{9}$

BSW/CSW (SSES)

$$\frac{\sum_{n=1}^{11} SSES_{item_n}}{11}$$

BBSW^b

$$CSW_{type} - BSW_{type}$$

Table 2: Key value calculations.

^aInternal/Mixed MBs, x = 3; External MBs, x = 4; Overall MBs, x = 10. ^bBBSW types are moral, SSES, and average (the calculated average of the first two types).

3.5.2 Qualitative Data: Open-ended responses provided in-depth and unexpected explanations for quantitative data, expanding the study’s scope to internalized thinking of participants beyond data correlations (Dawadi et al., 2021). Responses (n = 80) were analyzed by 1) reading over raw answers; 2) coding for common words/phrases; 3) developing themes based on commonality analysis; and 4) debriefing theme inferences with peers to ensure coding credibility. While some themes arose during coding, the researcher also based some off four main themes prevalent in “hustle culture” content, which my vignette replicates (Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023).

3.5.3 Integration: After processing all data (calculations and coding), the researcher triangulated qualitative themes with quantitative data trends to search for underlying reasoning in statistical relationships. For example, if the MB-BBSW correlation is strong, a frequent theme of “productivity” can underline that MBs manifest as a psychological mechanism which places productivity as at least a partial determinant of SW. Moreover, analyzing data convergence or divergence between methods could reveal greater support of data or nuances not in the statistics alone (Dawadi et al., 2021). Triangulation, thus, strengthens the study’s data inferences by drawing on the strengths of each method.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The study obtained school board approval via submission and presentation of its initial research inquiry. Before tracking and analyzing data, the researcher anonymized participant names with codified identifiers (i.e. S6) in a confidential, password-locked *Excel* chart. All ethical measures, potential harms, and procedural information were clarified to participants in a consent form required to be signed by participants and a guardian, ensuring full informed consent (see Appendix G). The primary potential risk was temporarily decreased self-worth from social media comparison, though this potential decrease was minimal from viewing only one brief vignette. To mitigate this and other potential harms, the debrief message sent to participants immediately following the study states that the vignette or other social media comparisons should never be used to measure one’s worth (see Appendix F for debrief message). Moreover, to avoid prolonged deception of the vignette itself, the message clearly stated that the vignettes were falsified but based closely on real TikTok videos.

Throughout all research stages, the researcher informed participants of their right to withdraw at any time with no penalties and provided accessible communication contacts for any concerns. All confidential codified lists connecting data to participant names were permanently deleted following all analyses.

3.7 Methodological Limitations

During data collection, placing BSW measures separate from CSW allows for discrepancies in SW measures not controlled by the vignettes (i.e. failing a test one day). However, the moral SW measures alongside triangulation of open-ended responses provide more stable and internal reinforcement for findings. Moreover, few TikTok videos analyzed were of males ($n = 8$), with only one in high school. Males may compare themselves to different video types and/or the male vignette created is not entirely accurate to what videos high school males do view pertaining to daily routines.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Data Overview

The final dataset consisted of 40 students ($n = 40$); 23 females and 17 males. Data was collected via online surveys and an in-person survey after viewing the vignette. Both quantitative data and short qualitative responses are represented in the study's findings, as is the triangulation thereof.

4.2 Vignette Checks

All attention check questions to the vignette were answered correctly by the sample, with 100% of participants indicating the correct timeframe for waking up shown in the vignette and listing at least one element from the video. Moreover, 83% of all participants responded that anyone on social media would 'somewhat' or 'very' likely see a video like this on their FYP (for you page). Individually, 91% of females reported seeing videos similar to the vignette online beforehand, while 71% of males said the same. See responses in a full showcase of in-person survey results in Appendix I.

4.3 Quantitative Results

Regarding the first research question on how MBs correlated to BBSW, Spearman's ρ tests concluded that among the total sample ($n = 40$) there was a weak correlation found to be insignificant for all three measures of MBs to Average BBSW: societal ($\rho = 0.0311$; $p > 0.05$), internal ($\rho = 0.0372$; $p > 0.05$), and school ($\rho = -0.2195$; $p > 0.05$). In dissecting the Average BBSW to both Moral and SSES BBSW, a weak positive correlation emerged for Moral BBSW while a weak negative one arose for SSES BBSW – though both mostly remained insignificant. In correlation to internal MBs, for example, $\rho = -0.1735$ ($p > 0.05$) for Moral BBSW and $\rho = 0.2008$ ($p > 0.05$) for SSES BBSW.

To address hypothesis two, how this correlation may be influenced by participant gender, the overall dataset was divided into two separate tables by gender (female, $n = 23$; male, $n = 17$). The relationship

from school MBs to both Average and Moral BBSW, independently, was found to be significant for females. In Table 3 below, ρ values from Spearman's ρ tests and their p-value significance levels for the female dataset are depicted. Each cross-section represents the two variables tested for. Figure 2 depicts the graphed correlation of School MBs to Average BBSW in female participants. The linear trend represented within the trendline is weakly negative but significant ($\rho = -0.4944$; $p < 0.05$).

Variables	MB				BBSW	
	Societal	Internal	School	Average	Moral	SSSES
MB						
Societal	X	0.5682***	0.2908	0.0035	-0.1032	0.1056
Internal	0.5682***	X	0.3195	-0.008	-0.1247	0.0973
School	0.2908	0.3195	X	-0.4944**	-0.4629**	-0.3998*
BBSW						
Average	0.0035	-0.008	-0.4944**	X	X	X
Moral	-0.1032	-0.1247	-0.4629**	X	X	0.4342**
SSSES	0.1056	0.0973	-0.3998*	X	0.4342**	X

Table 3: Spearman's ρ correlational values for female data.

Note. X = same variables overlap or variables derived of each other overlap (i.e. Internal MBs are a component of Societal MBs).

* $p < 0.1$. ** $p < 0.05$. *** $p < 0.01$.

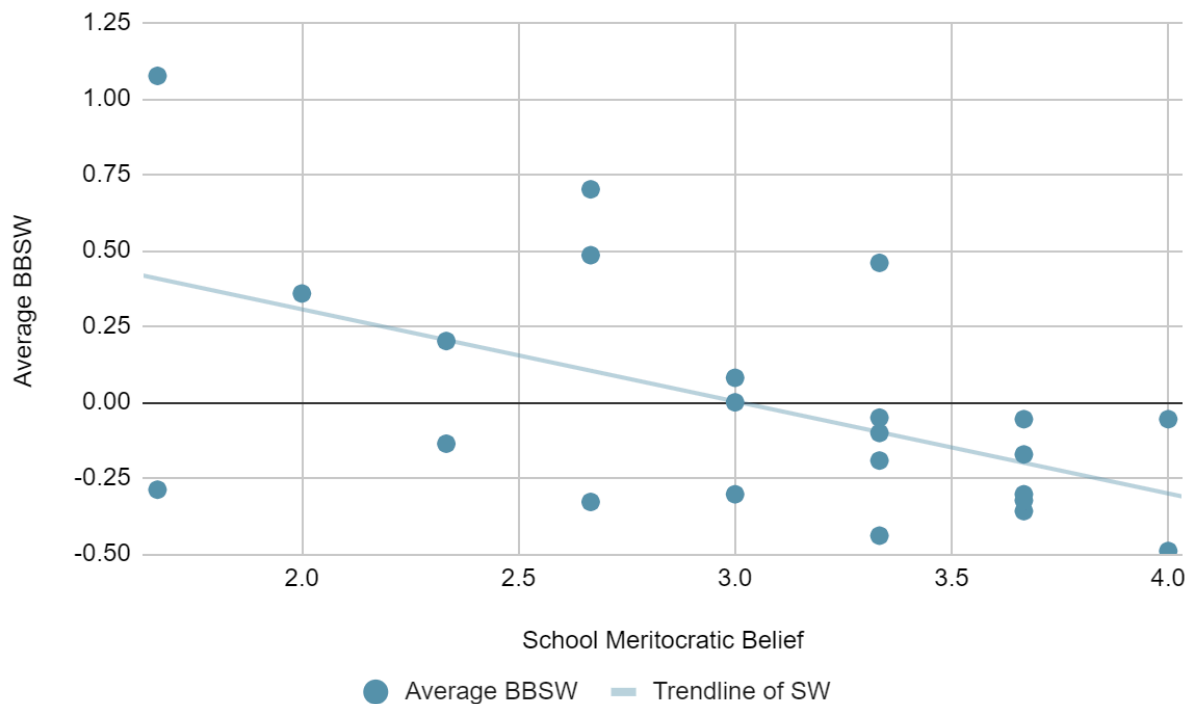


Figure 2: Female School MB to Average BBSW correlation.

Note. Blue dots are direct participant data points; the trendline shown is linear.

To address the influence of RB, a multi-regression model (1) was tested amongst the variables of School MBs (SMB) and Average BBSW in females, with RB as a second independent variable. The model is depicted below:

$$BBSW = 0.657 - 0.054SMB^2 + 0.073RB. \quad (1)$$

Multi-regression model testing data is shown in Tables 4 and 5. Both predictors of SMB^2 and RB were independently significant with $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.05$, respectively. SMB^2 held a stronger negative standardized coefficient (-0.545), while RB held a less strong positive standardized coefficient (0.367). The r-squared value as adjusted for a smaller sample of the f-test is 0.359, being significant at $p = 0.005$. The model predicts around 36% of the variance in the female quantitative data. See Appendices H, I, and J for full recorded quantitative survey results.

Source	DF	Sum of Square	Mean Square	F Statistic	P-value
Regression	2	1.424534	0.712267	7.159511	0.00451805
Residual	20	1.989709	0.0994855		
Total	22	3.414243	0.155193		

Table 4: ANOVA and F-Stat results of multi-regression model.

	Coefficient	Standard Error	T-statistic	Standard Coefficient	P-value	VIF
b	0.656552	0.191275	3.432504	0	0.00263603	
<i>SMB</i> ²	-0.0541928	0.0169788	-3.191793	-0.545194	0.0045812	1.001309
<i>RB</i>	0.0731346	0.0340686	2.146686	0.366678	0.0442646	1.001309

Table 5: Multi-regression T-Test results with School MBs, RB, and Average BBSW in females.

4.4 Qualitative Results

Coding themes were constructed via reading responses, highlighting common words/phrases, then developing themes from these commonalities. 80 responses composed the sample (female: n = 46; male: n = 34; 2 per participant). Many themes were based on the constructs of hustle culture analyzed in social media (Chairunnisah & Kurnia, 2023). See Table 6 for response examples.

For question one, the main themes observed were: 1) busyness/effort; 2) physical health; and 3) rest/leisure. As for question two, the themes were: 1) [aspects of] hustle culture; 2) personal fulfillment; and 3) general health. Each theme holds more specific subcategories (see Appendix K for full qualitative results). The commonalities amongst subcategories were used to craft the overarching themes. Figure 3 graphs thematic frequency among responses by gender

	Female	Male
Question #1		

Busyness/effort	“... - Go to school (attend a club meeting or volunteer) - Go to job or internship - Do homework - Have a meeting for an organization - Do an independent project (email, writing, applications, stuff to advance myself etc...) - Practice - SAT prep”	“-Wake up early -Walk dog -Go to the gym... -Lock in for schoolwork... -Finish homework -Go to violin rehearsal -Go volunteer -Go to bed”
Physical health	“- wake up early - motivate myself to exercise before school - make a healthy breakfast... - get home and have a healthy lunch/snack (depending on if I ate lunch at school)... - go to dance^a”	"... getting a good amount of sleep and... being physically healthy, go to the gym, running, making healthy food"
Rest/leisure	“hanging out with... friends, and doing something that [I] enjoy”	“... Also save time to relax and spend time with friends”

Question #2

Hustle culture	“I would feel extremely productive and secure that I am doing the best I can to succeed. Sometimes I feel like I am not doing enough to succeed... I would feel more secure about my efforts”	“I would since I am a busy person and do everything for the best of my ability and I'm able to push myself for different stuff and continue to do more”
Personal fulfillment	“doing things to better oneself and enjoy life demonstrates that people care about themselves and know their value”	“To hold very high self-worth, it also values high self-respect. I view high self-worth in hand with caring about yourself”

General health	“because i do things that keep me happy and healthy and then i can put more energy into school and others”	“It is a culmination of actions that treat yourself properly ensuring that your body and mind are healthy”
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Table 6: Qualitative response theme examples by each gender.

^aDance is classified here as an athletic activity.

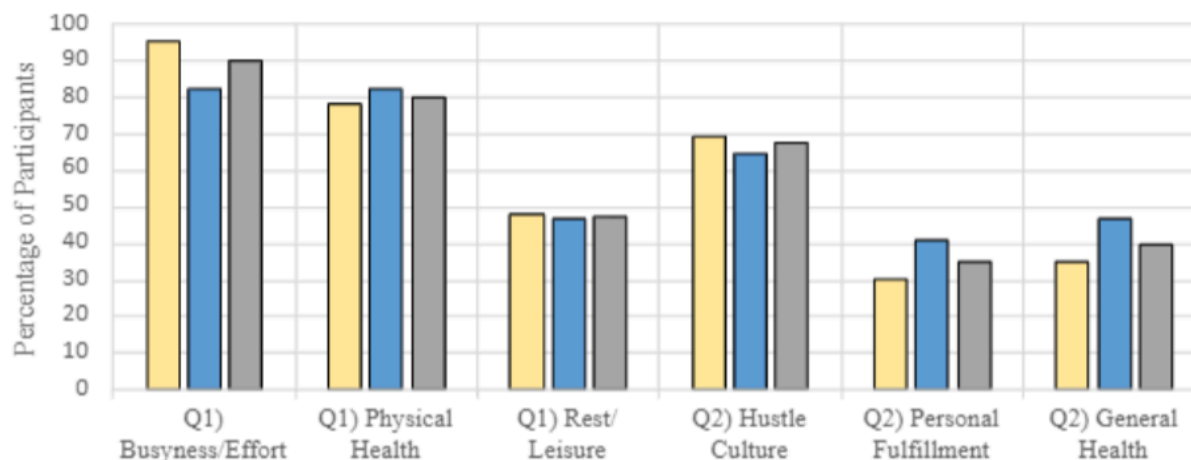


Figure 3: Prevalence of coding themes in responses by gender.

The most prevalent theme of the 80 total responses was busyness/effort for Q1 (90% of participants mentioned) and hustle culture aspects for Q2 (67.5%). After describing a rigorous schedule, female participant S21 reflected in Q2 under the hustle culture theme: “Sometimes I feel like I am not doing enough to succeed... I would feel more secure about my efforts if I had this schedule”. The least frequent themes were Rest/Leisure for Q1 (47.5%) and Personal Fulfillment in Q2 (35%). The most prevalent activity listed in part of the Q1 “high self-worth” schedule was homework/studying at 75%, with 25% mentioning such 2 times or more.

Observing gender differences, there was an around equal mention of rest/leisure for Q1, but over 10% more of females mentioned busyness/effort themes than did males. In Q2, females mentioned success and self-improvement more than males by over 10%, but males mentioned personal fulfillment (41.2%) and general health (47.1%) themes more than females (personal fulfillment = 30.4%; general health = 34.8%). In Q2, one male student commented on a schedule he created for high self-worth: “It balances work, personal health, and keeping a goo[d] social standing with family and peers.” This theme of balance and rest was more frequent in male responses (29% male; 17% female).

4.5 Summary

In the overall quantitative data sample, there were no significant relationships among the variables of MBs or BBSW. However, dividing up the data by gender revealed significant correlations: both Average and Moral BBSW held a significant negative correlation to School MBs, and a multi-regression model showed a significant relation of both Average BBSW and RB to School MBs in females. Neither occurred for the male sample.

The qualitative data showcased further emphasis on busyness' role in self-worth, with the most frequent theme mentioned in both questions 1 and 2 concerning busyness/effort or aspects of hustle culture. Busyness/effort in Q1 and aspects of hustle culture in Q2 like success were more frequently mentioned by females, while rest/leisure was more mentioned by males.

DISCUSSION

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

In the total sample of both genders, no significant MB-BBSW correlation was found. Hypothesis 1, therefore, is partially rejected since it did not apply to all students. Thus, the following analysis dissects the correlation within only females due to their observed significance. The quantitative results of the Spearman's ρ test suggest that female high school students with stronger school-based MBs tend to have decreased moral and overall self-worth evaluations after comparatively viewing a hustle culture social media lifestyle (Chairunissah & Kurnia, 2023) post. This is especially when RB is factored in, with the multi-regression model predicting around 36% of the data. School MBs may have been the only significant MB measure due to its direct relevance to high school students and the fact that societal MBs are so commonly held that few Americans hold low societal MBs (Zhu, 2025).

Moreover, the qualitative responses suggest that the majority of high school female and male students associate busier or more effortful schedules with greater self-worth, most often citing their reasoning with values pertaining to hustle culture. This pattern was stronger across female responses: more females mentioned busyness/effort (Q1) and hustle culture values (Q2) for each question, while more males mentioned general health and personal fulfillment in their reasoning for why a schedule may uphold their self-worth (Q2). Thus, these results suggest that females tend to more strongly associate hustle culture values with their own self-worth, which may underpin why they tended to state busier or more effortful schedules as those in which they held high self-worth.

Triangulating these analyses, the greater mentions of busyness and hustle culture values by females in qualitative responses is consistent with the significant negative MB-BBSW correlation shown only in the female sample. The consistent referral to "success", "self-improvement", or a need to "do enough" among the open-ended responses may suggest that the female's decreased self-worth occurs from this sense of not being as "busy" or "hardworking" as the hustle culture vignette they watched – having lower RB. Moreover, these elements align with the influence of stronger MBs in American society: busyness seen as

an indicator of greater SES (Bellezza et al., 2017); a need to strive constantly to become successful (Davey, 2017); and placing responsibility on the individual to do so (Rauscher et al., 2024). MBs have also been shown to impact one's sense of moral identity (McConnochie, 2024) and generate greater pressure to meet these expectations of MBs on an individual level (Burgess et al., 2022), especially documented within females (Davey, 2017). The findings shown within this literature can contribute to a lower sense of self-worth when participants with high MBs feel they are not up to par with the pressure to work hard and stay busy so they may succeed. Thus, the alignment between the two methods of the present study provides greater support for confirmation of hypothesis two.

The literature similarly supports why only the significant negative MB-BBSW correlation may only have been found in the female sample. The “myth of meritocracy” (belief in a nonexistent meritocracy) in working-class high school female students causes a constant striving to fulfill an ideal of being successful – a “supergirl” – though that pressure causes harsher self-judgement, self-blame for failure, and guilt (Davey, 2017). All of these can contribute to a lower sense of self-worth, as observed in the lowered self-worth of female students with higher MBs. The common discrediting to female systemic barriers when evaluating performance (Tedder-King & Sherf, 2024) and the individualization of blame (Rauscher et al., 2023) may affirm that females are more likely to blame themselves for failing to be the meritocratic “super girl”, thus harming their self-worth. The mentions of “not doing enough”, “holding [one]self to a high standard”, or “doing everything possible to achieve success” by female respondents align with the burden to fulfill expectations for constant striving at any cost, which may facilitate the lowered BBSW when participants perceived they had failed to do so after watching the video.

5.2 Implications

In the literature, the current study bridges a gap between quantitative and qualitative research that are unable to fully address the intersection of MBs and morality on the level of self-introspection. The findings suggest that MBs play a role in moralizing busyness among students, particularly amongst female students. Through these findings, the research addresses the mentions of MBs within qualitative literature focusing on how pressure to achieve can impact moral or overall self-worth (Burgess et al., 2022; McConnochie, 2024; Davey, 2017). The quantitative evidence, demonstrating how MBs can cause self-worth to decrease in the face of busyness comparisons, affirms these prior findings. The data is particularly significant in establishing that the online phenomena of hustle culture (Chairunnissah & Kurnia, 2023) can, through busyness comparisons, lower self-worth in student users with higher MBs. With widespread MBs in America (Zhu, 2025), these findings also apply in practical settings including individual avoidance of hustle culture content to mitigate self-worth reduction or not framing busyness as a parameter for “effort” or indicator of “success”. Further, the research suggests that interventions on parts of schools or parents to mitigate low self-worth can target MBs and its moralization of busyness, especially since schools can reproduce MBs via neoliberal ideology and may impact the moral identity of students (McConnochie, 2024).

5.3 Limitations

The largest limitation of this study was its small sample size, which particularly affected the male sample of only 17 participants. A correlation may have been found in the overall or male sample could the research have attained more male participants. However, considering that the overall larger sample showed no significant correlation, while the female sample did with less, it is likely that more male participants would not have revealed a significant correlation. It also affirms the strength of the female correlation despite the small sample. Still, the small overall sample limits findings to a small population and may not account for all high school students. Moreover, though the triangulation of each method used did showcase greater support for the findings, the choice to not closely specify MBs in the open-ended responses could limit that relevance. Despite comparing aspects of the responses to aspects of MBs in the literature, a more closely connected question or reference may have improved support for the hypothesis.

5.4 Design Evaluation

This study's methodology was well-aligned for its research question, with both quantitative correlational data and qualitative introspective responses providing a firm basis for the psychosocial research. In analyzing the data itself, choices of quantitative tests and categorization of variables based on the literature closely align it with established ideas and grant greater credibility to the findings of this study. Moreover, the vignettes were designed carefully and intentionally to successfully integrate the aspect of hustle culture into the study's findings. Researching and analyzing videos online upholds that the vignettes are accurate to real hustle culture content. If repeating the study, the researcher would first aim for a larger research sample, but they would also adapt the open-ended questions to apply closer to the element of MBs in generating self-worth evaluations.

5.5 Conclusion

Responding to the initial research questions this study put forth, two claims are supported. First, students overall do not strongly show a correlation of MBs to BBSW and RB did not appear to play a role in such. Secondly, however, female students do exhibit a significant, negative correlation of school-based MBs to BBSW influenced by RB. This conclusion affirms hypothesis 2 and partially disproves hypothesis 1 as overgeneralized. The correlations displayed were also present in the open-ended responses, wherein females more so associated high self-worth within schedules with aspects of hustle culture including busyness and a need to do as much as possible for "success". Again, the greater proportion of these hustle culture-focused themes in female answers showcases how the MB-BBSW correlation is stronger in females even on an introspective level.

5.6 Field Contributions

In the literature, the mixed-methods approach of this study effectively captures both ends of the literature to create a psychosocial lens of MBs: the quantitative associations of individual effort to success/failure which MBs can generate (i.e. Rauscher et al., 2019) is intertwined with qualitative observations of increased youth pressure to "do everything" and succeed under (i.e. Burgess et al., 2022). By taking this psychosocial lens, this study positions MBs as both a dominant sociocultural influence and a moral heuristic for one's own worth based on effort – or busyness as its image within hustle culture. Under this

understanding, the study advances how MBs as a social construct can influence more personal thought processes and judgements. It does not solely influence SES perceptions despite its origins as a societal belief (Bellezza et al., 2017), but the findings showcase that it influences psychological self-worth assessments as well. Thus, this study's psychosocial approach connects the social roots of MBs to observed pressures to succeed and "do enough" under hustle culture, but also in the general American working society. Moreover, the direct integration of online hustle culture (Chairunnissah & Kurnia, 2023) further showcases how online comparisons via social media do not only socialize MBs but can influence self-worth through it. With the relevance of youth hustle culture, whether online (Chairnuissah & Kurnia, 2023) or socially (Burgess et al., 2022), the findings presented are important in mitigating the self-worth harm it may cause. It also highlights how busyness comparisons are likely underpinning this societal trend motivated by generally predominant MBs in the U.S. especially (Zhu, 2025). Finally, this study's close focus on gender differences provides a greater basis for understanding how systemic barriers interact with MBs. The findings suggest how female students, who likely experience more challenges to success due to uncontrollable factors like sexism, tend to discredit these barriers since MBs associate failure more often with an internal fault of effort (Tedder-King & Sherf, 2024).

5.7 Future Research

Future research on this subject should primarily fulfill greater methodological intricacy that this paper could not with limited time and resources within the span of the high school year (end of August to mid-June) and with only high school resources. Specifically, the study suggests 1) gathering a larger student sample to predict results with greater significance; 2) using more advanced statistical technology to amplify this study's conclusions and possibly develop a more applicable, predictive multi-regression model that this study's access to *Excel* programs could not; and 3) more thoroughly triangulate the data by connecting participant-specific quantitative and qualitative results to analyze trends from MB-BBSW correlations to open-ended responses. On the first suggestion, although the significance of the female MB-BBSW correlation persisted despite their relatively small sample size, a larger sample size for both genders could uncover a possible significant correlation in males - if not as strong as females. Further research can also incorporate a pre- and post-vignette comparison of qualitative responses by adding open-ended responses to the preliminary survey, thus enhancing triangulation by observing if participants associated higher self-worth to busy schedules even without the presented "image of effort" online. Finally, further research can assess the MB-BBSW correlation among and between other marginalized versus "dominant" (or non-marginalized) groups. Considering that the more marginalized females showed a significant negative correlation whereas non-marginalized males did not, viewing the same correlations between other systemically advantaged and disadvantaged groups – like black and white Americans – could reveal a larger trend in how MBs discredit systemic barriers on a wider scale. This direction may open space for studies on how this correlation – especially if homogenous for other marginalized groups – poses more significant harm for marginalized peoples' self-worth due to dominant American MBs.

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APPENDIX A: Demographic Data of Sample and School District

A.1. Sample Demographics

Gender: 58% Female, 43% Male.

Race/Ethnicity: 50% White, 17% Hispanic/Latino; 28% Asian, 2% Black/African American, 2% other [Middle Eastern].

Age: 68% participants = 16, 30% participants = 17, 3% of participants = 15.

Courseload was recorded via Likert-scale responses to indicate the relative amount of a class level taken in a year (*none*; 1-2; 3-4; 5-6; 7+) in order of most academically rigorous to least.

A.2 Entire School District Demographics

Cannot cite the school for anonymity purposes.

Gender: 47% Female, 53% Male

Race/Ethnicity: 60.8% White, 21.6% Hispanic, 11.8% Asian, 3.4% Black, 1.7% Two or More Races, 0.5% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

APPENDIX B: Measure Development and Charts

B.1 Moral Worth (BSW and CSW)

Development: 9 traits commonly associated with those of moral character as identified in widely cited study of Aquino and Reed (2002): caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind.

Measure: Participants rate self-alignment (or alignment of the vignette student from the in-person survey) with the 9 traits on five-point Likert scales (1 = *not at all*; 5 = *completely*).

B.2 State Self-Esteem (BSW and CSW)

Development: adapted from Heatheron and Polivy's (1991) widely cited SSES (State Self Esteem Scale).

Item	Primary Factor
1. I feel confident about my abilities.	Performance
2. I am worried about whether I am regarded as a success or failure. (R)	Social
3. I feel satisfied with the way my body looks right now.	Appearance
4. I feel frustrated or rattled about my performance. (R)	Performance

Item	Primary Factor
5. I feel that I am having trouble understanding things that I read. (R)	Performance
6. I feel that others respect and admire me.	Appearance
7. I am dissatisfied with my weight. (R)	Appearance
8. I feel self-conscious. (R)	Social
9. I feel as smart as others.	Performance
10. I feel displeased with myself. (R)	Social
11. I feel good about myself.	Appearance
12. I am pleased with my appearance right now.	Appearance
13. I am worried about what other people think of me. (R)	Social
14. I feel confident that I understand things.	Performance
15. I feel inferior to others at this moment. (R)	Social
16. I feel unattractive. (R)	Appearance
17. I feel concerned about the impression I am making. (R)	Social
18. I feel that I have less scholastic ability right now than others. (R)	Performance
19. I feel like I'm not doing well. (R)	Performance
20. I am worried about looking foolish. (R)	Social

Table B1. SSES survey table taken from Heatherton & Polivy, 1991, p. 898.

Notes: 9 items entirely removed: all 6 appearance items; 2 items with outdated/odd wording [items 4 and 20]; 1 performance item with overly specific phrasing [item 5 mentions reading in specific]; items 2 and 17 combined into one item [adapted item 8 omitted the “success/failure” details]; items 15 reworded to lessen emotionally harsh language: changed “inferior” to “lesser”; item 18 reworded to lessen specificity of the item; condensed “scholastic ability” to “ability”; other minor phrasing changes for up-to-date clarity and understanding; item 11 created and added to reflect the induced comparison to online hustle-culture oriented videos as seen in the qualitative study of Burgess et al. (2021).

Adapted Item	Primary Factor
1. I feel confident about my abilities	Performance
2. I feel self-conscious (R)	Social
3. I feel as smart as others	Performance
4. I feel displeased with myself (R)	Social
5. I am worried about what others think of me (R)	Social
6. I feel confident that I understand things	Performance
7. I feel lesser than others at this moment (R)	Social
8. I feel concerned about the impressions I make on others (R)	Social
9. I feel like I'm not doing well (R)	Performance
10. I feel I have less ability right now than others (R)	Performance
11. I feel like I have not done enough (R)	Performance ^a

Table B2. Adapted State Self Esteem Scale. R = reversed scoring (i.e. 1 becomes a 5).

^aItem 11 is focused on busyness comparisons.

Measure: Participants rated agreement with each statement on five-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

B.3 General Meritocratic Beliefs

Development: synthesis of MB measures and SES attainment measures across 3 studies (Im & Shane, 2022; Zhu, 2025; and Lei et al., 2021). Categories adapted from those of Im and Shane (2022): Merit, Opportunity, and Chance. Because the moral weight associated to actions can differ based on perceived responsibility/internal control of the person (Weiner, 1994), the current study uses categories ranked by how internally controlled a factor is/can be. Items were adapted and fit to categories from across all three studies.

Subscale	Dimensions
----------	------------

Internal	Hard Work (1,2,3)	Ambition (2)	Learned Skill (1)	
Mixed	One's Own Education (2,3)	Family SES (1,2,3)	Family/Social/Other Connections (1,2,3)	
External	Inherent Talent (3)	Race (2)	Gender (2)	Luck (1,3)

Table B3. Meritocratic Belief scales and subscales for measurement. 1 = Im & Shane (2022); 2 = Zhu (2025); 3 = Lei et al. (2021).

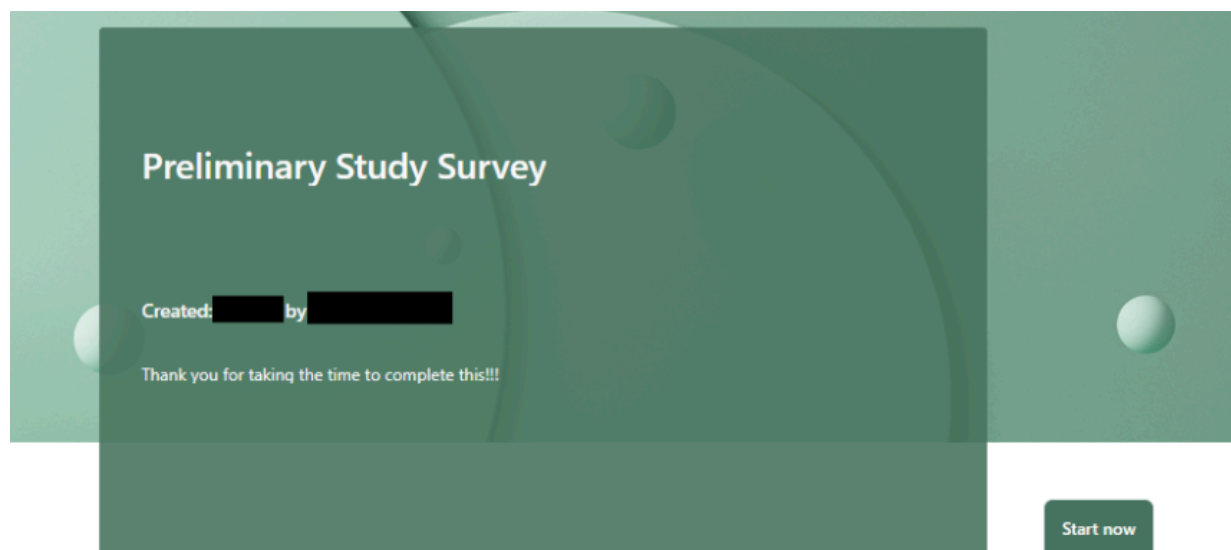
Measure: Participants asked to rate importance of each item for succeeding in American society in general on five-point Likert scales (1 = *Not impactful*; 5 = *Very impactful*)

B.4 School Meritocratic Beliefs

Development: adapted from Darnon's et al. (2019) study employing 3 school-oriented MB statements. Rephrased statements to lessen absoluteness of statements (i.e. removed the word "only" in a statement) and ensure alignment with high school students. See adapted statements as following: 1) "At school, where there is a will, there is a way"; 2) "Students are given an equal chance to succeed in school"; 3) "To succeed at school, one has to work hard".

Measure: following Darnon et al. (2019), students ranked agreement with statements on five-point Likert scales (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

APPENDIX C: Preliminary Survey on Microsoft Forms Application



* Required

* This form will record your name, please fill your name.

Demographic Information

*If you are uncomfortable sharing any information in this section, feel free to answer: "Prefer not to say".

1. What gender do you identify as? *

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-binary
- ☐ Prefer not to say

2. What is your race/ethnicity? *

- ☐ White
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native American or Alaska Native
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino
- ☐ Prefer not to say
- ☐ Other

3. What is your age? *

The value must be a number

Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

4. Please indicate the relative amount of each class level you have in your course load this year: *

	None	1-2	3-4	5-6	7+	Prefer not to say
IB Courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
AP Courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Honors Courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A Level Courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
B Level Courses	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Self Evaluation

There are no right or wrong answers. Please choose the option you believe is best, according to how you feel at the CURRENT moment. If uncomfortable or unable to answer, select the "neutral" or "partially" option.

5. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with yourself: *

	Not at All	A Little	Partially	Mostly	Completely
Caring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compassionate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generous	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helpful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hardworking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Honest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kind	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

6. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you *currently* feel: (reminder that all answers will be anonymized for data collection) *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel confident about my abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel self-conscious	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel as smart as others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel displeased with myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am worried about what others think of me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident that I understand things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel lesser than others at this moment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel concerned about the impressions I make on others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel like I'm not doing well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel I have less academic ability right now than others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel like I have not done enough	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

8. Please rate your agreement with the following statements regarding success in school in general: *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
At school, where there is a will, there is a way	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students are given an equal chance to succeed in school	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
To succeed at school, one has to work hard	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Lunch Availability Dates

This is for the proposed in-person surveys. They will take around 10 minutes during lunch and you will be provided two sticks of gum as compensation for your time. Each survey will have around 3-5 people in a room depending on availability. Thank you!

9. Please select any dates that work with your schedule during lunch. You should plan to have the first 25 minutes of the lunch period free to get to the designated location and in case of technology or other issues. I will send out the locations for each date with reminders in the days leading up to the survey. *

- ☐ February 2nd
- ☐ February 3rd
- ☐ February 4th
- ☐ February 6th
- ☐ February 9th
- ☐ February 11th
- ☐ February 13th

10. Would you like to be surveyed in the same room as anyone else? (They must be participating in this survey. Look at the Teams group chat if you are unsure of participants).

Notes:

Question 5: 9 traits empirically identified as those commonly ascribed to “moral individuals”; the scale has been adapted and cited widely since its inception (Aquino & Reed, 2002).

Question 6: SSES statements (Heatherton & Polivy, 1991); 10 removed because:

6 were appearance-based and thus irrelevant to the study goal of busyness comparisons

Some included overly specific or outdated language not pertaining to the study and required adaption (i.e. “I feel I have less scholastic ability than others right now” changed to “I feel I have less academic ability than others right now”)

1 item added: “I feel I have not done enough” to suit the busyness comparison focus of the study and align with hustle culture online which promotes feelings of needing to do more (Burgess et al., 2019; Chairunissah & Kurnia, 2023).

Question 7: SES Attainment Belief System (See Appendix B).

Question 8: School MB statements (Darnon et al., 2019) adapted with age-appropriate phrasing as Darnon’s study focused on younger children than the current sample of high school juniors.

APPENDIX D: TikTok Video Analysis and Vignette Development

The researcher systematically analyzed 36 videos on TikTok under the searches “busy day in my life”, “busy diml”, “productive day in my life”, and “productive diml”, sometimes adding descriptors like “high

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school” or “male” for demographic specificity. Using an *Excel* chart, the researcher coded important themes and information across this sample to inform vignette creation. Due to low frequency of male videos and only 1 with a high school male student, this study drew male videos more heavily from broader male demographics (including non-students and higher education students). Below are key Findings from TikTok Analysis Chart on Excel (n = 36):

D.1 Video Analysis Notes Overall

Video Demographics: Female: 28 videos; male: 8 videos (only one was a high school student); 15 total were high school students; 29 total were students (high school, university, college, or graduate students); 7 were either: in workforce; did not explicitly show/say their current occupation.

Video Atmospheres: Most videos followed an interpersonal, vlog style and often used text on screen for times and activities shown.

Title Commonalities: 19 videos had title or intro of “day in my life”/ “DIML”, generally followed by identity specification “as a... [insert descriptor/role]” and an adjective to describe that day (busy, productive, etc). 31 videos show the face of the poster.

Wakeup Times: [not all videos list it] 4:00-4:59 AM = 3 videos; 5:00-5:59 AM = 11 videos [4 videos say 5:30 AM]; 6:00-6:59 AM = 6 videos; 7:00-7:59 AM = 3 videos; and 4 videos wake up at 8 AM or later.

Schedule Commonalities: [only included the 29 student videos for analysis] Study/homework sessions for 2+ hours (23 videos); work or studying most often depicted on laptops; work/service activity (5 videos out of 15 high school student videos); meeting, video calls, clubs (8 videos); sport involvement or going to public gym (17 videos); hygiene/self-care (6 videos).

Bedtimes: [not all show/list] 10:00-10:59 PM = 10 videos; 11:00-11:59 PM = 3 videos; 12:00-12:59 AM = 2 videos; 3 videos sleep at 1 AM or later.

Caffeine Shown: coffee: 13 videos; matcha: 5 videos; energy drinks: 8 videos.

D.2 Gender-Based Variations

Female (n = 28): visual presentation: curated, aesthetic, light-hearted, idealistic; energy drinks: nearly all female high school students had energy drinks; emojis were common (20 videos); less frequent “leisure” (non-work/academic/self-care) activities (64% of female videos; 2 videos mention journaling [no male videos do]).

Male (n = 8): visual presentation: chill, slick, minimalistic, sometimes vaguely cinematic editing (i.e. complex transitions/editing, mood-lighting, etc); energy drinks: four out of five males who consumed caffeine had coffee at some point; single high school male student had an energy drink; emojis were less common than females (2 videos only use in caption, 1 shows throughout video); more frequent “leisure” related activities (88% of videos).

D.3 Stakeholder Checking (McInroy & Beer, 2021)

Three non-participating juniors agreed to assess validity of the vignettes. All 3 reported the final product as believable, accurate to similar content online, and very busy. See some feedback is as follows: “...this is def[initely] a 10-10 [10 out of 10] productive [day]... It looks like a normal [T]ikTok” and “... it was

good.” Suggestions undertaken were to use slightly less curated photos to maintain realistic vignette and blur out names on the “board meeting” photo.

Timeframe	Female	Male
5:30 AM	Wakeup	Wakeup
5:35-6:00 AM	Get ready	Get ready
6:15 AM	Get to gym	Get to gym
6:15-7:15 AM	Ab[dominal]s and cardio[vascular exercise] day at gym	Ab[dominal]s and cardio [vascular exercise] day at gym
7:30 AM ^a	Grab energy drink (bright, aesthetic packaging; <i>Alani</i>)	Grab energy drink (minimalistic packaging; <i>Celsius</i>)
7:30-11:30 AM	Study session #1	Study session #1
12:00 PM	Board meeting call	Board meeting call
1:00-3:30 PM	Study session #2 (at cafe, friend shown, with coffee)	Study session #2 (at cafe, friend shown, with coffee)
4:00-6:00 PM	Vague sport volunteer coaching	Vague sport volunteer coaching
7:00-7:50 PM	English reading annotations	English reading annotations
7:50-10:00 PM	Independent project	Independent project
10:00-10:15 PM	Shower	Shower
10:15-10:30 PM ^a	Journaling and ‘wind down’ (more self-care related)	Netflix and ‘wind down’ (more leisure related)

10:30 PM

Bedtime

Bedtime

Table D1. Final created schedules for each vignette based off commonalities, gender differences, and stakeholder feedback. Most gender differences impacted the photos used in the vignettes (see Appendix D), not the activities completed (with small exceptions).

^aDifferent activity by gender.

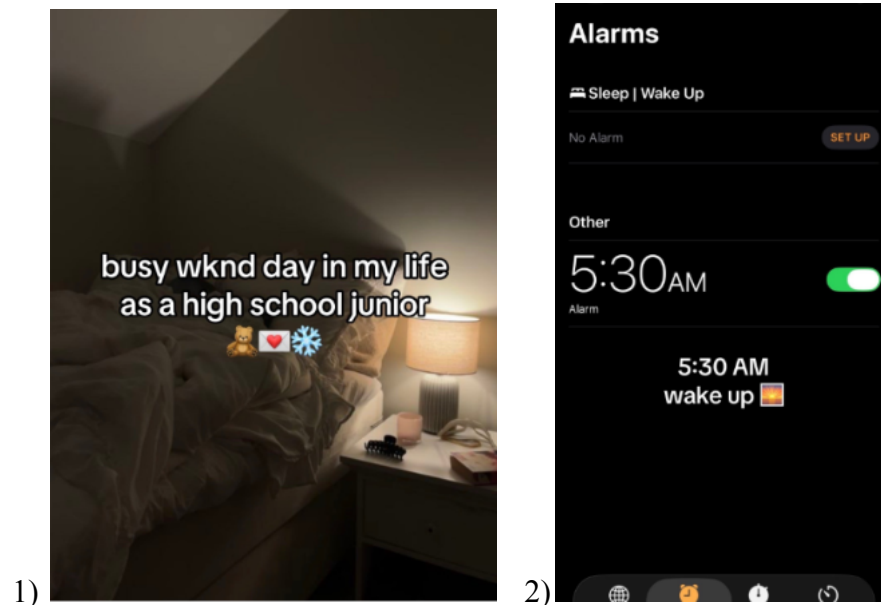
APPENDIX E: Vignette Development and Stakeholder Checking

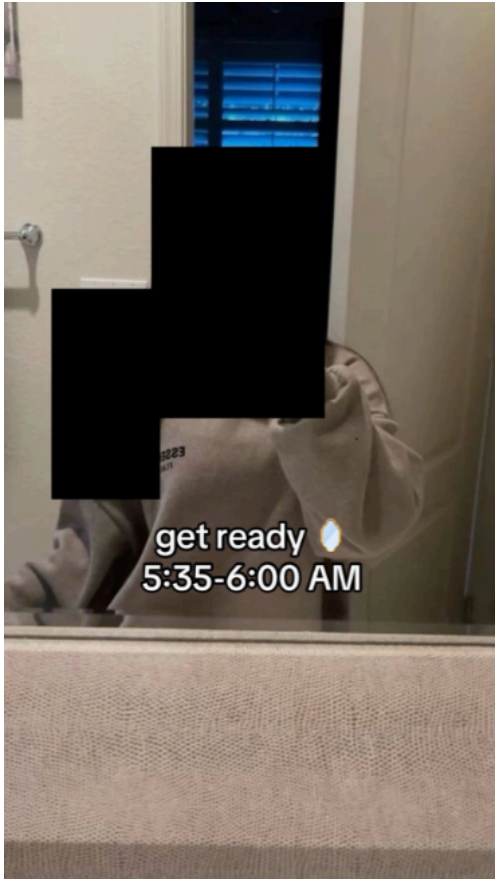
E.1 Vignette Creation Process

The exact steps are as follows: 1) source relevant photos for each scheduled activity/frame from Pinterest or phone screenshots, with photos being selected differently by gender based on depicted atmospheres when necessary; 2) edit black boxes over identifying information (skin, hair, faces, names, etc); 3) upload photos into a TikTok video in the photo slideshow format; 4) add text for times and activities alongside title text; 5) download the video as a set of photos; 6) upload the photos to a Canva slideshow by which participants can similarly scroll through all photos as if on a TikTok video.

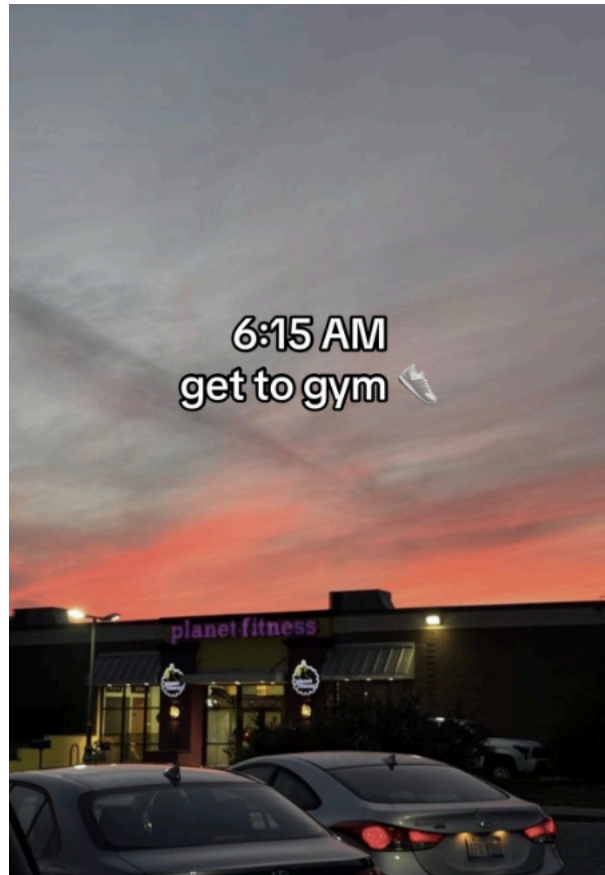
When possible, the same photos, or at least same features (i.e. gray hoodies in mirror selfies for each photo 3), were used in both the male and female vignettes to maintain consistency.

E.2 Final Female Vignette Photos

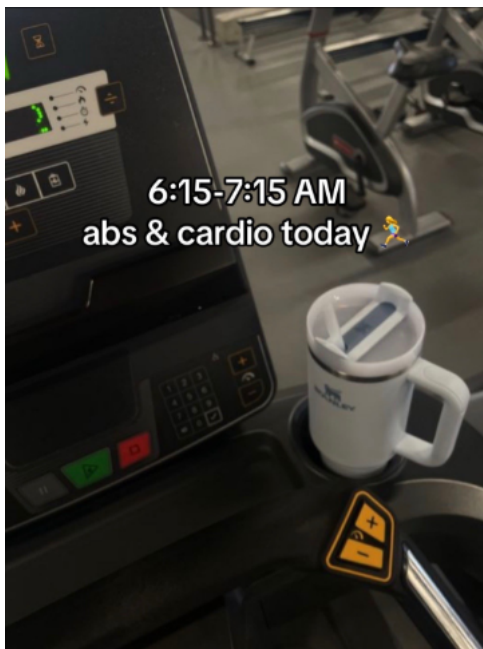




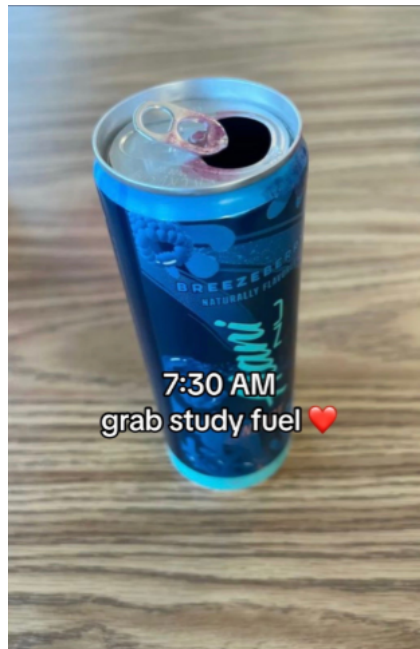
3)



4)

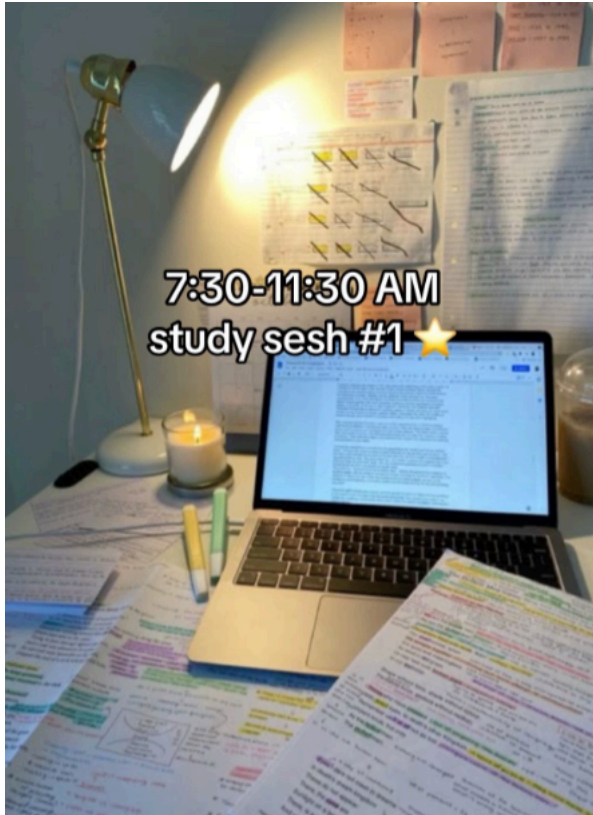


5)

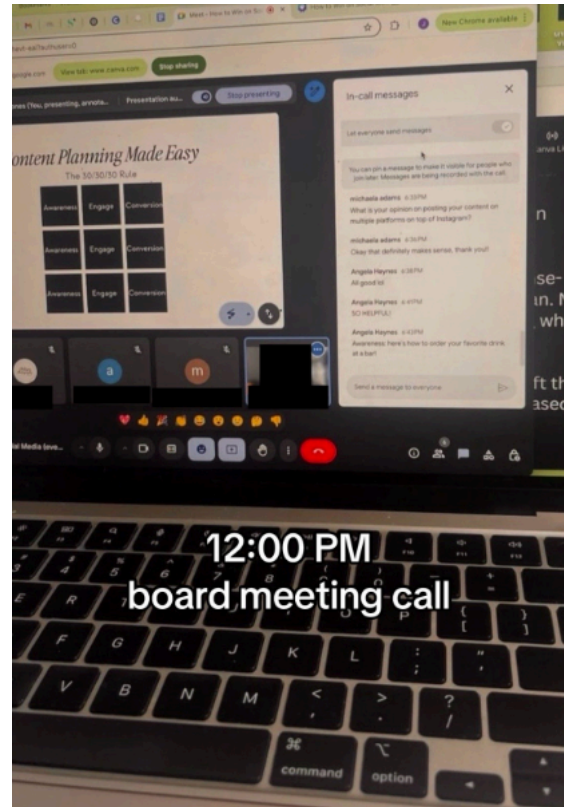


6)

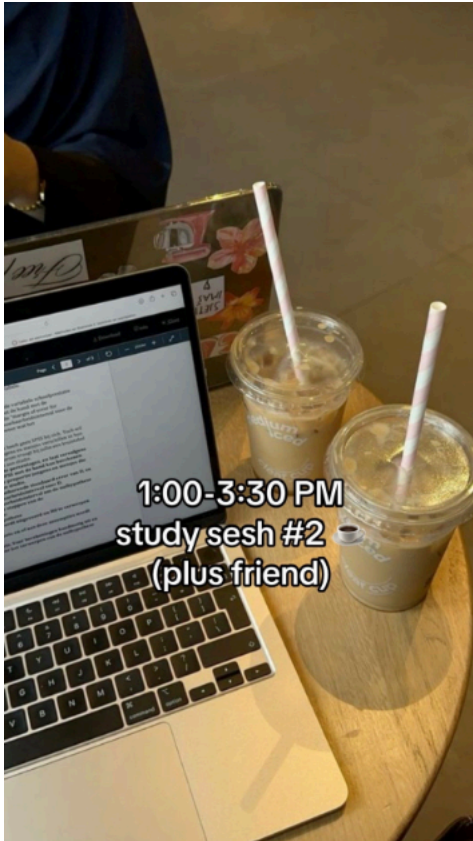
Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students



7)



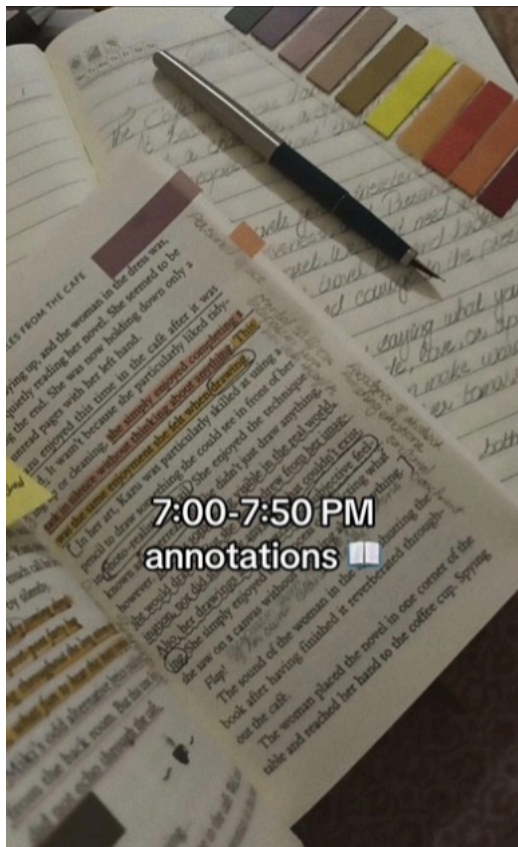
8)



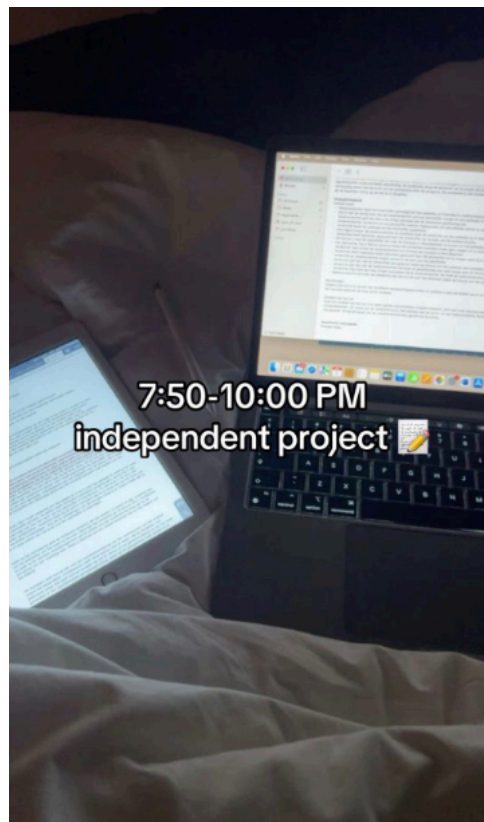
9)



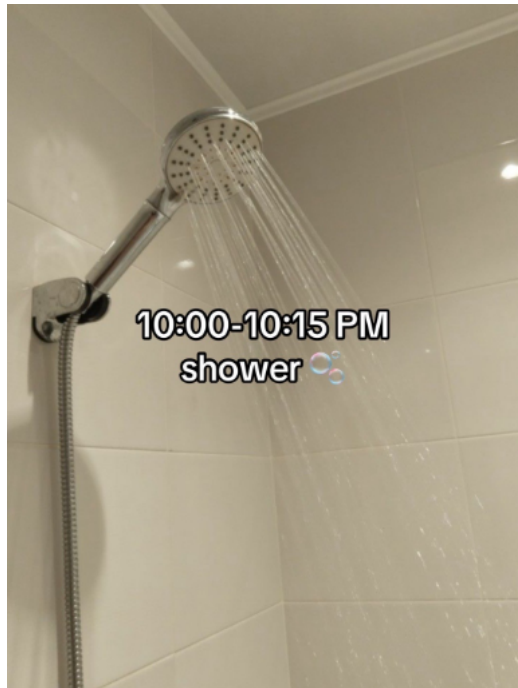
10)



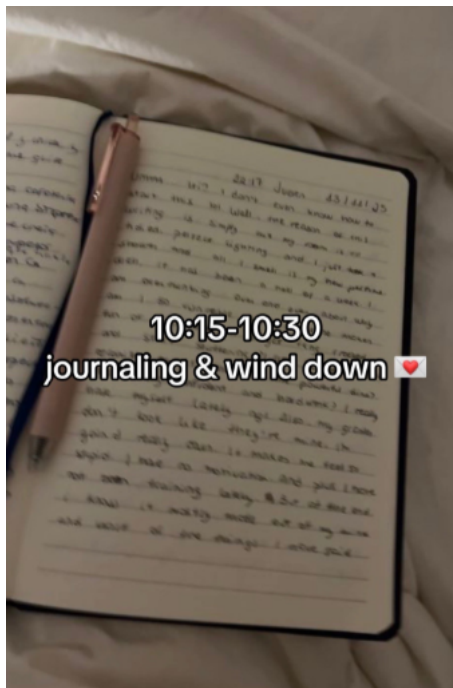
11)



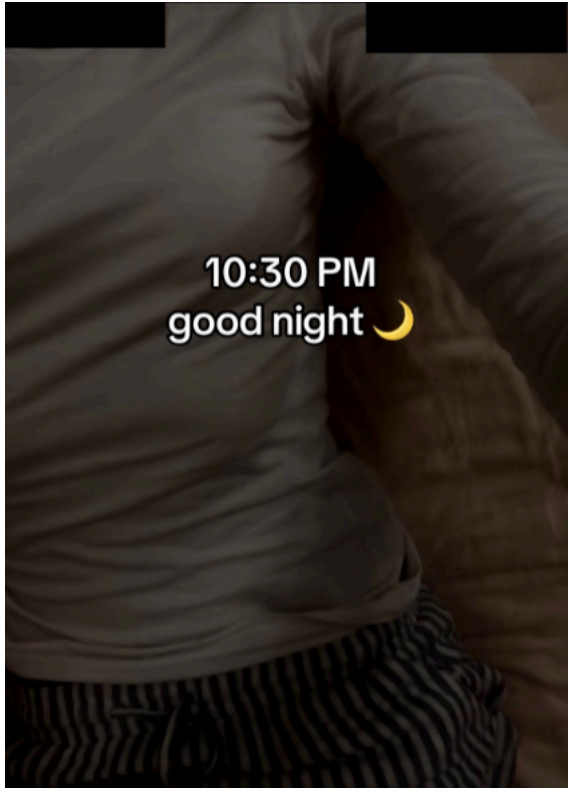
12)



13)

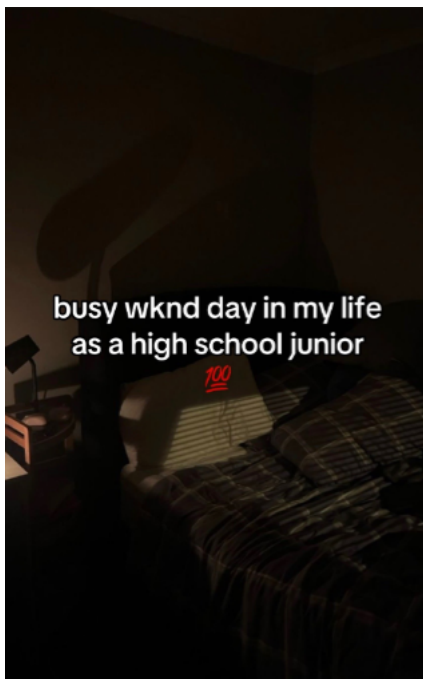


14)

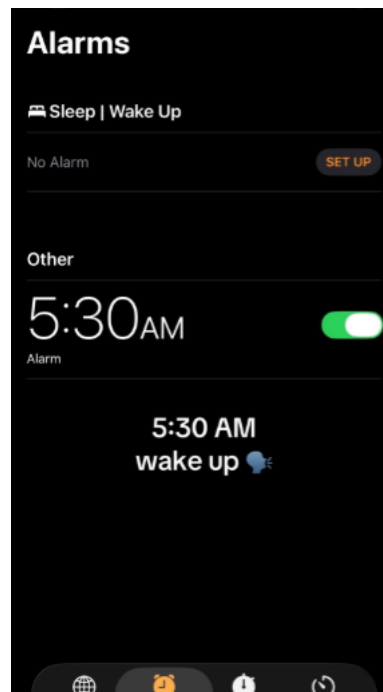


15)

E.3 Final Male Vignette Photos

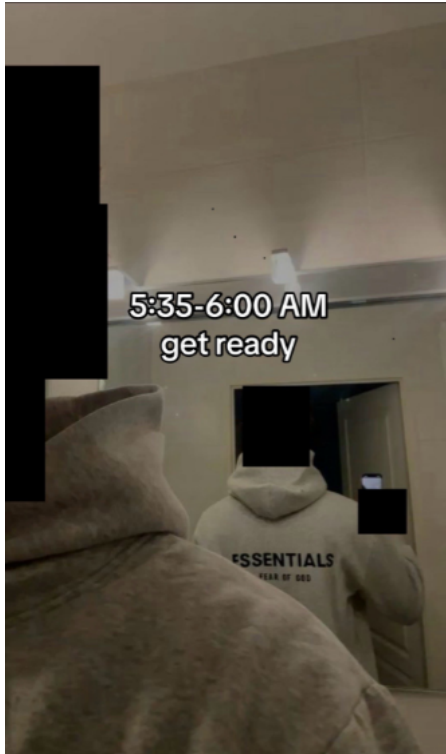


1)

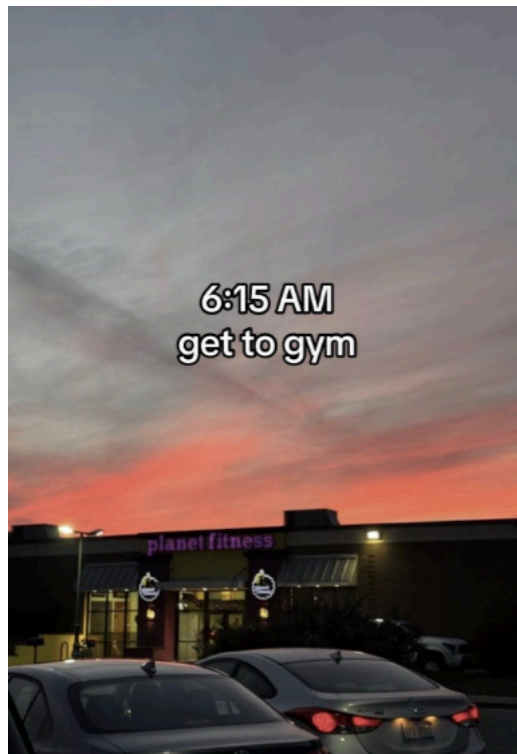


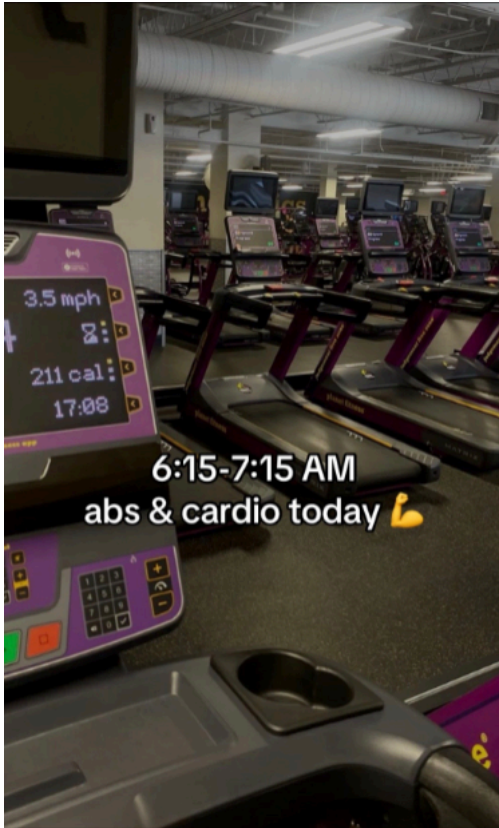
2)

3)

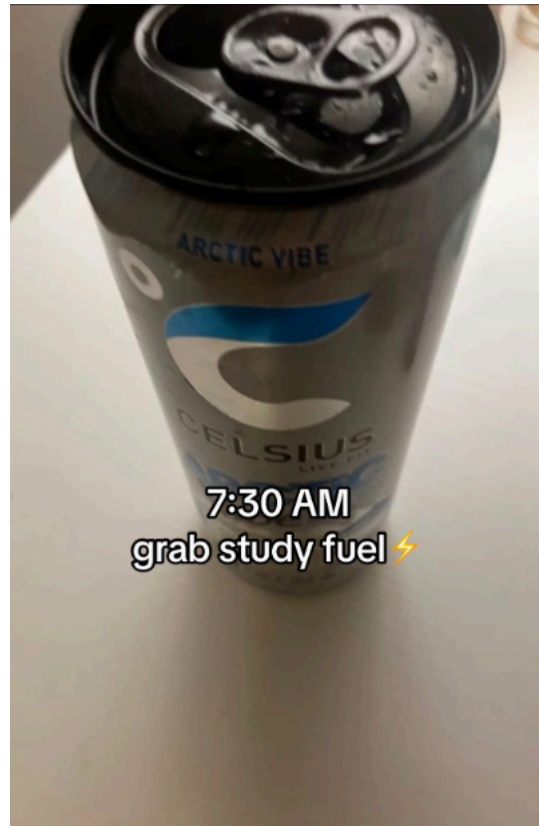


4)



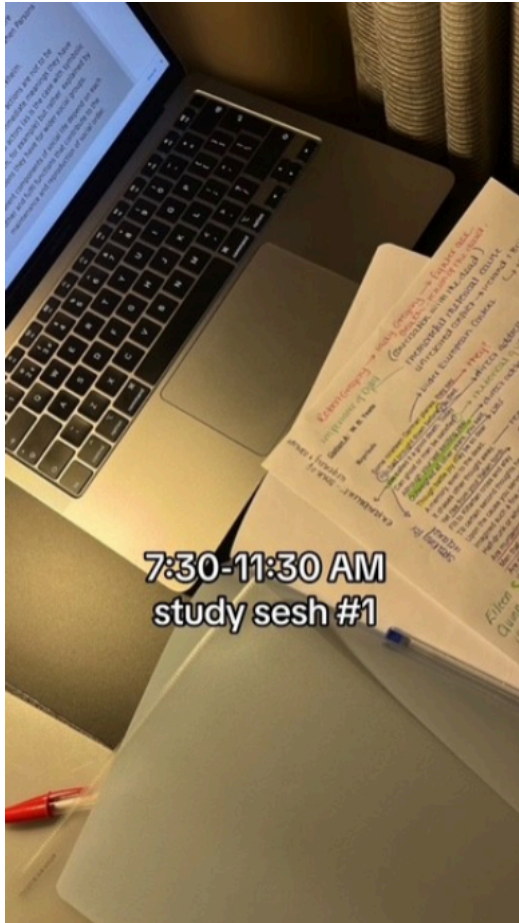


5)

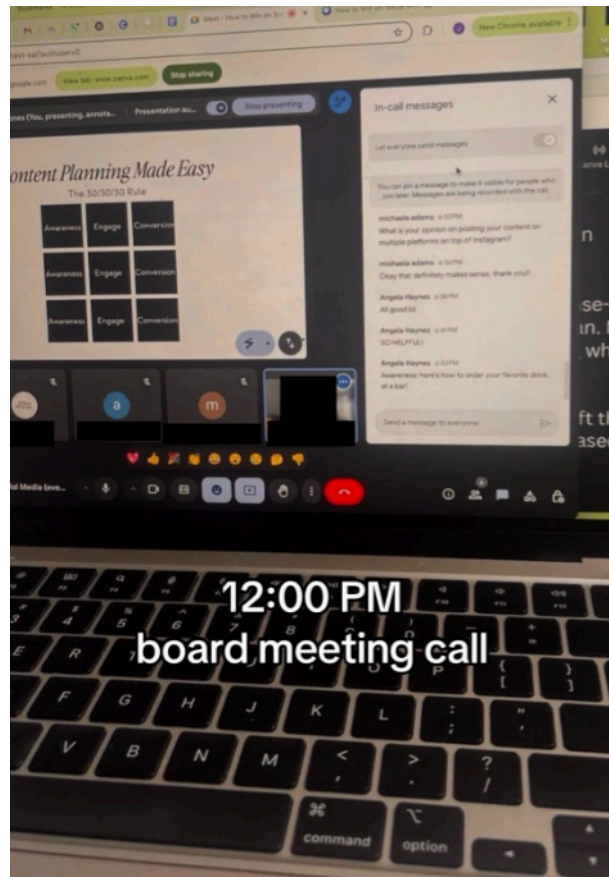


6)

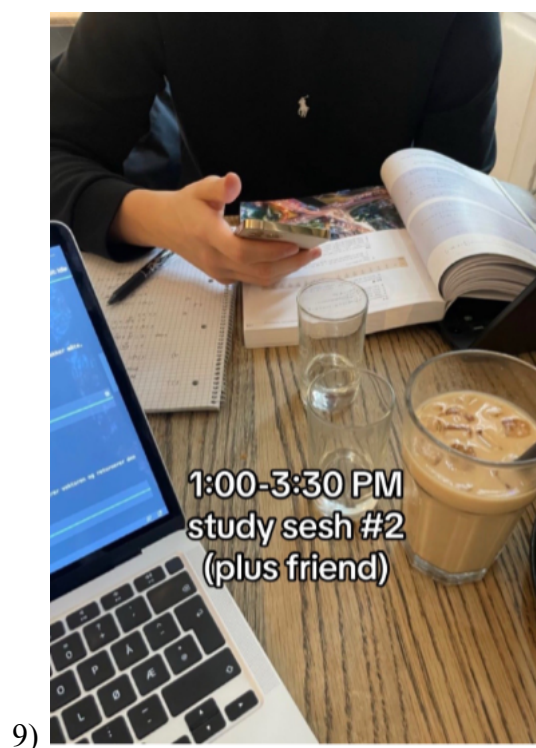
Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students



7)



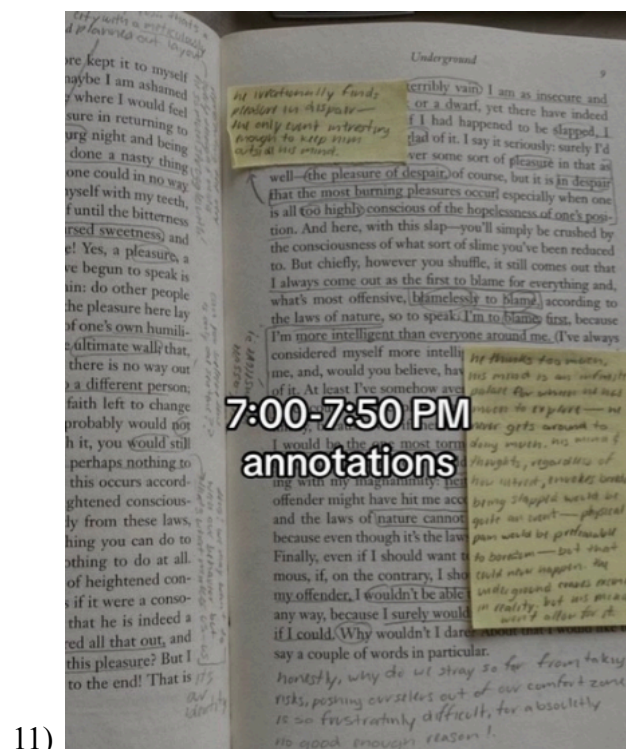
8)



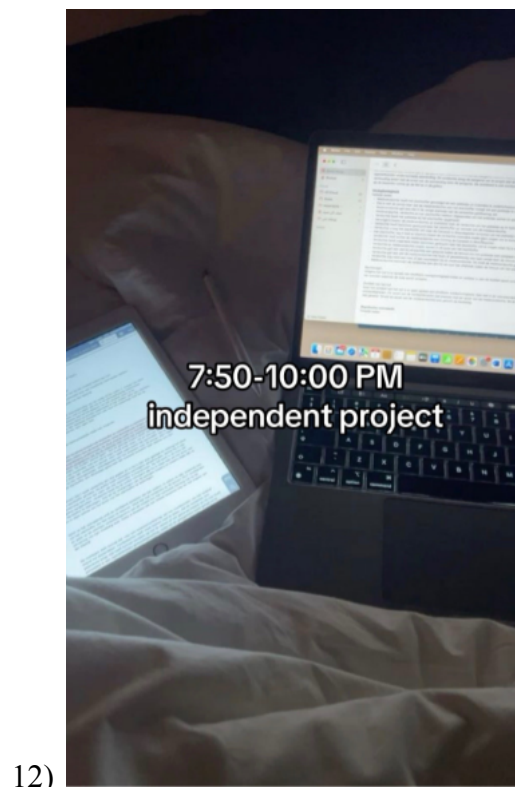
9)



10)



11)



12)

13)



14)





15)

APPENDIX F: In-Person Survey and Debrief Script

F.1 In-Person Survey Participant View

In-Person Survey (1)

Hi [redacted] When you submit this form, the owner will see your name and email address.

* Required

Video Questions

1. Please list or describe any activity or action the person listed in the video (**cannot** answer "waking up" or "going to bed"). *

Enter your answer

2. Please indicate at what relative time the person woke up. *

☐ Early in the day

☐ Late in the day

3. Please indicate how likely you believe a video similar to the one shown might appear on the for you page (FYP) of anyone using a social media platform. *

☐ Very likely

☐ Somewhat likely

☐ Neither likely nor unlikely

☐ Somewhat unlikely

☐ Very unlikely

4. Please indicate if you have viewed, on social media, videos similar to the one shown. *

☐ Yes

☐ Maybe

☐ No

Next

Busyness

5. Please indicate how busy you believe **the person depicted in the video** to be on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not busy at all, 10 being extremely busy). *

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

6. Please indicate how busy you believe **yourself** to be on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not busy at all, 10 being extremely busy). *

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Back

Next

Video Evaluation

7. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with **the person in the video**: *

	Not at All	A Little	Partially	Mostly	Completely
Caring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compassionate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generous	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helpful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hardworking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Honest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kind	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

8. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you believe **the person in the video** may have felt: *

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
They feel confident about their abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel self-conscious	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel as smart as others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel displeased with themselves	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They are worried about what others think of them	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel confident that they understand things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel lesser than others at that moment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel concerned about the impressions they make on others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel like they're not doing well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel they have less academic ability right now than others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
They feel like they have not done enough	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Self Evaluation 🔍

9. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with **yourself**: * 🔍

	Not at All	A Little	Partially	Mostly	Completely
Caring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compassionate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fair	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Generous	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helpful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Hardworking	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Honest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Kind	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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10. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you *currently* feel: (reminder that all answers will be anonymized for data analysis). *

☐

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel confident about my abilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel self-conscious	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel as smart as others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel displeased with myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am worried about what others think of me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel confident that I understand things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel lesser than others at this moment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel concerned about the impressions I make on others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel like I'm not doing well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel I have less academic ability right now than others	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel like I have not done enough	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open Ended Question ☐

This is **optional**. However, it is highly encouraged to advance the findings of this study if you are able to! The answers do not have to be longer than even a few words.

11. Imagine you hold very high self-worth. Briefly describe what your daily routine might look like. (This answer **does not require** any specific format: it can be bulleted, a paragraph, incomplete sentences, a few words, etc.) ☐

Enter your answer

12. Please elaborate why you believe you would hold "very high self-worth" based on your imagined schedule. (Again, no specific format is required) ☐

Enter your answer

F.2 Debrief Message

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www.oxfordjss.org

The following message was sent/read aloud to all participants upon completion of all surveys:

That is the whole survey. All steps are now complete. For ethical reasons, I will share that the video is falsified. The photos were sourced from Pinterest but replicated actual TikTok videos. Do not use this video or similar videos online as comparison for yourself; they are not realistic to actual schedules, and one's worth should never be reliant upon the extent of what they do or accomplish in a day. Thank you!

APPENDIX G: Consent Form

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Introduction

- I am a student at [REDACTED] and I am in a class that requires me to complete a research study. My project is titled "Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations". In my study, I seek to understand the belief in the role of hard work and ability towards societal advancement (Meritocratic Beliefs) and its possible correlation to one's self-worth perception based on their busyness compared to others. In essence, the current study will help to expose a possible moralization of busyness to one's self perception.
- You have been selected as a possible participant because of your response to an interest form sent out to various classes and advertised on posters in the school.
- I ask that you and your parent read this form before agreeing to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Study

- The purpose of this study is to understand how beliefs about social mobility may influence high school students' sense of self-worth when comparing their lifestyle to other students online.
- I intend to eventually publish the study and, thus, will make all information about the study's findings, participant data use, and publication process known to participants.
- If you participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a pre-study online survey to obtain preliminary information. The survey will take around 6-9 minutes. Questions will include those regarding self-worth, beliefs in social mobility, and demographic information. Providing demographic information is optional. Upon completion of both this consent form and the online survey, a date will be selected between the participant and myself for a lunch or zero period for an in-person survey. The dates will be January through February, and the in-person survey should take no longer than 15 minutes. It will include watching a TikTok video of a student's daily lifestyle, answering questions regarding the video's content, and answering questions comparing oneself to the student and their lifestyle. Most answers will be on a scale measuring the participant's agreement with a statement or multiple choice, though there are a few optional but brief open-ended questions. Debriefing after the in-person survey will occur, taking no longer than 3 minutes.

Risks and Benefits

- The study involves some minimal risks to participant wellbeing, especially if they are prone to moderate or extreme social media comparison. These risks are possible feelings of inadequacy in the participant by comparing their lifestyle to that of a student online and/or a possible desire to attain the lifestyle of the student online by watching the video.
- The benefits of participation are contributions to understanding of high school student mental health and current social mobility beliefs alongside being given 2 sticks of packaged, untarnished gum after completing the in-person survey. The gum will still be given if the participant chooses during the in-person survey to not complete it. No reason for exiting the in-person survey is required.

Confidentiality

- This study is anonymous, and I will not be retaining any information about your identity. Identifying information will be used to categorize data by participant then promptly removed. Findings from the study will not include any information in any report that would make it possible to identify you. Only demographic information will be used to find patterns in the data but will not be tied back to your identity.
- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. They will be kept secure by files on my computer, locked with passwords and accessible only to myself and my AP Research teacher. My teacher will not have access to identifiable information; that will be only held briefly by myself to categorize data based on form

- responses. All participant data will be anonymized when stored in files as "student_#" (i.e. "student_34").
- All records and recordings will only be used for educational purposes, and these will be properly destroyed when the paper has been fully completed and reviewed to submit for the end of year AP Research project due in late April.
 - As I plan to publish these findings, signing this consent form includes both consent to participate in the study, consent for the information to be part of my AP Research study, and consent for the study to be published.
 - All questions will be optional if a student would prefer not to answer. However, it is encouraged to answer the questions.

Questions and Concerns

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered before, or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, [redacted] at [redacted] (school email) or [redacted] (personal/work email).
- A summary of the results of the study can be sent to you upon request.
- If you have any concerns or problems that I have not addressed, you may contact my instructor at those same two emails.
- If you desire to stop participating in the study at any time before the project is submitted in late April for the AP project or before it is potentially published, including any time after participant completion of all procedures and surveys, please contact me at either email given above. All participant data, identifying information, or any specific information desired to be removed from your surveys will be promptly deleted and not stored anywhere.

Consent

Your signature below indicates that you agree to participate as a research subject for this study, that your parent or guardian has agreed to your participation in the study, and that you and your parent/guardian have read and understood the information provided above. The parent signature and consent is required for minors only.

Parent/Guardian Name: _____
Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____
Student Name: _____
Student Signature: _____ Date: _____
Investigator's Name: [redacted]
Investigator's Signature: [redacted] Date: [redacted]

Please note that this research project has been approved by the school.

APPENDIX H: Quantitative Results

Meritocratic Beliefs Overall:

Participant	Internal	Societal	School
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Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

S1	4.666666667	1.671641791	4.333333333
S2	5	1.538461538	5
S3	4.666666667	1.287356322	3.666666667
S4	4.666666667	1.671641791	3
S5	4.666666667	1.493333333	3.333333333
S6	4.333333333	1.072164948	3.333333333
S7	4.666666667	2	4
S8	4.333333333	1.209302326	3.666666667
S9	4.333333333	1.155555556	4
S10	5	1.621621622	2.666666667
S11	4.333333333	1.06122449	3
S12	5	1.153846154	3.666666667
S13	4.666666667	1.191489362	4
S14	5	1.395348837	3.333333333
S15	3.666666667	1.060240964	3.666666667
S16	4.666666667	1.131313131	3.666666667
S17	4.666666667	1.287356322	3
S18	4.333333333	1.762711864	3.666666667
S19	4	1.6	2.666666667
S20	4.333333333	1.444444444	4.333333333
S21	3	0.660550459	4
S22	4	0.914285714	2.333333333
S23	3.666666667	1.275362319	1.666666667
S24	4.666666667	0.991150442	1.666666667
S25	4.333333333	1.195402299	4
S26	4	1.627118644	4
S27	3.666666667	0.838095238	2
S28	4	1.043478261	3.666666667
S29	5	1.165048544	3.666666667
S30	4.333333333	1.168539326	3.333333333
S31	3.333333333	0.909090909	2.333333333
S32	4.666666667	1.435897436	4.666666667
S33	4	1.411764706	4.666666667
S34	4.333333333	1.925925926	3.666666667
S35	4.333333333	1.824561404	4
S36	5	1.081081081	4

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S37	2.333333333	0.903225806	2.666666667
S38	4.333333333	1.11827957	4
S39	4.666666667	1.75	3.333333333
S40	4.666666667	2	3.666666667

Composite BSW and CSW Values:

Participant	BSW			CSW		
	<i>Moral</i>	<i>SSES</i>	<i>Avg</i>	<i>Moral</i>	<i>SSES</i>	<i>Avg</i>
S1	3.888888889	3	3.444444444	3.666666667	3.090909091	3.378787879
S2	3.666666667	3.545454545	3.606060606	4.333333333	3.727272727	4.03030303
S3	3.666666667	2	2.833333333	3.777777778	1.545454545	2.661616162
S4	3.666666667	2.636363636	3.151515152	3.333333333	2.363636364	2.848484848
S5	4	1.636363636	2.818181818	3.444444444	2.090909091	2.767676768
S6	3.666666667	2.454545455	3.060606061	3.555555556	2.363636364	2.95959596
S7	3.777777778	3.272727273	3.525252525	4.222222222	3.181818182	3.702020202
S8	4.111111111	3.727272727	3.919191919	4.666666667	3.818181818	4.242424242
S9	4.555555556	3.727272727	4.141414141	3.888888889	3.181818182	3.535353535
S10	3.444444444	2.727272727	3.085858586	3.777777778	3.363636364	3.570707071
S11	3.555555556	2.545454545	3.050505051	3.444444444	2.818181818	3.131313131
S12	4.444444444	3.909090909	4.176767677	4.111111111	3.909090909	4.01010101
S13	3.888888889	3.636363636	3.762626263	3.777777778	3.363636364	3.570707071
S14	3.333333333	2.454545455	2.893939394	3.888888889	2.818181818	3.353535354

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S15	4.111111111	3.363636364	3.737373737	3.777777778	3.090909091	3.434343434
S16	3.555555556	2.545454545	3.050505051	3.111111111	2.272727273	2.691919192
S17	3.222222222	2.272727273	2.747474747	3.222222222	2.272727273	2.747474747
S18	4.666666667	3	3.833333333	4.111111111	2.909090909	3.510101010
S19	3.333333333	1.727272727	2.530303030	3.555555556	2.909090909	3.232323232
S20	4.222222222	3.272727273	3.747474747	3.888888889	3.454545455	3.671717172
S21	3	2	2.5	3.666666667	1.636363636	2.651515152
S22	4.222222222	2.454545455	3.338383838	4.444444444	2.636363636	3.540404040
S23	3.222222222	2.272727273	2.747474747	3.555555556	4.090909091	3.823232323
S24	4.111111111	1	2.555555556	3.444444444	1.090909091	2.267676768
S25	3.888888889	2.727272727	3.308080808	3	2.636363636	2.694214876
S26	4.111111111	3.272727273	3.691919192	3.888888889	2.636363636	3.262626263
S27	3.666666667	3.090909091	3.378787879	4.111111111	3.363636364	3.737373737
S28	3.555555556	2.909090909	3.232323232	3.666666667	3.272727273	3.46969697
S29	3.666666667	2.181818182	2.924242424	3.555555556	2.181818182	2.868686869
S30	4.111111111	2.272727273	3.191919192	4	2	3
S31	3.777777778	2.636363636	3.207070707	3.777777778	2.363636364	3.070707071
S32	4.111111111	3.545454545	3.828282828	3.888888889	3.818181818	3.853535354

S33	4.888888889	4.363636364	4.626262626	4.777777778	3.818181818	4.297979798
S34	4.444444444	3.909090909	4.176767677	4.444444444	3.545454545	3.994949495
S35	4.444444444	3.909090909	4.176767677	4.333333333	4.181818182	4.257575758
S36	4.444444444	2.363636364	3.404040404	3.888888889	2.545454545	3.217171717
S37	3.888888889	2.545454545	3.217171717	3.777777778	2	2.888888889
S38	4.666666667	2.727272727	3.696969697	4.555555556	2.727272727	3.641414141
S39	3.888888889	3.454545455	3.671717172	3.555555556	2.909090909	3.232323232
S40	3.888888889	3.636363636	3.762626263	3.777777778	3.818181818	3.797979798

Calculated BBSW Values:

Participant	BBSW		
	Moral	SSES	Average
S1	-0.222222222	0.090909091	-0.065656566
S2	0.666666667	0.181818182	0.424242424
S3	0.111111111	-0.454545455	-0.171717172
S4	-0.333333333	-0.272727273	-0.303030303
S5	-0.555555556	0.454545455	-0.050505051
S6	-0.111111111	-0.090909091	-0.101010101
S7	0.444444444	-0.090909091	0.176767677
S8	0.555555556	0.090909091	0.323232323
S9	-0.666666667	-0.545454545	-0.606060606
S10	0.333333333	0.636363636	0.484848485
S11	-0.111111111	0.272727273	0.080808081
S12	-0.333333333	0	-0.166666667
S13	-0.111111111	-0.272727273	-0.191919192
S14	0.555555556	0.363636364	0.45959596
S15	-0.333333333	-0.272727273	-0.303030303
S16	-0.444444444	-0.272727273	-0.358585859

Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

S17	0	0	0
S18	-0.555555556	-0.090909091	-0.323232323
S19	0.222222222	1.181818182	0.702020202
S20	-0.333333333	0.181818182	-0.075757576
S21	0.666666667	-0.363636364	0.151515152
S22	0.222222222	0.181818182	0.202020202
S23	0.333333333	1.818181818	1.075757576
S24	-0.666666667	0.090909091	-0.287878788
S25	-0.888888889	-0.090909091	-0.613865932
S26	-0.222222222	-0.636363636	-0.429292929
S27	0.444444444	0.272727273	0.358585859
S28	0.111111111	0.363636364	0.237373737
S29	-0.111111111	0	-0.055555556
S30	-0.111111111	-0.272727273	-0.191919192
S31	0	-0.272727273	-0.136363636
S32	-0.222222222	0.272727273	0.025252525
S33	-0.111111111	-0.545454545	-0.328282828
S34	0	-0.363636364	-0.181818182
S35	-0.111111111	0.272727273	0.080808081
S36	-0.555555556	0.181818182	-0.186868687
S37	-0.111111111	-0.545454545	-0.328282828
S38	-0.111111111	0	-0.055555556
S39	-0.333333333	-0.545454545	-0.439393939
S40	-0.111111111	0.181818182	0.035353535

Values used for Multi-Regression Analysis and Spearman's ρ Test (female only):

RB	SMB	BBSW Avg
-2	2.666666667	0.484848485
0	3.333333333	-0.050505051
-3	2.666666667	0.702020202
-2	3.666666667	-0.171717172
-1	3.333333333	-0.439393939
-2	2.666666667	-0.328282828
3	1.666666667	1.075757576

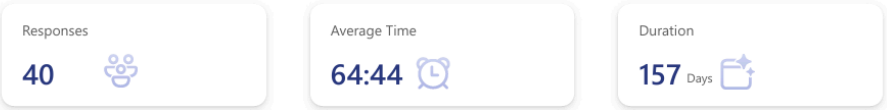
Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

-4	1.666666667	-0.287878788
-2	3.666666667	-0.303030303
-4	3.666666667	-0.358585859
-3	3.333333333	0.45959596
-5	3	-0.303030303
-4	2.333333333	-0.136363636
-2	2	0.358585859
-3	3	0.080808081
-2	3.333333333	-0.191919192
-4	3	0
-2	3.666666667	-0.323232323
-1	3.333333333	-0.101010101
-3	3.666666667	-0.055555556
2	4	-0.055555556
-1	4	-0.48989899
1	2.333333333	0.202020202

APPENDIX I: Preliminary Survey Results

Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

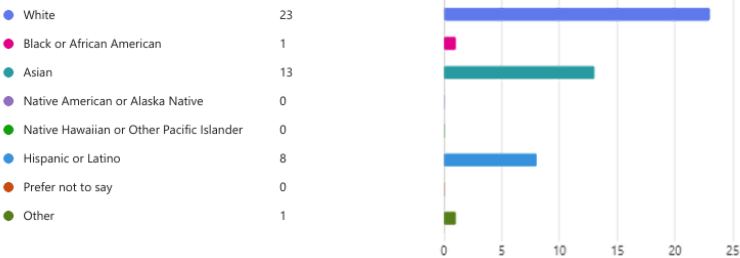
Responses Overview Active



1. What gender do you identify as?



2. What is your race/ethnicity?



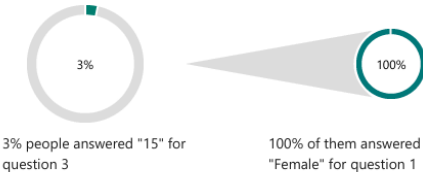
3. What is your age?



27 respondents (68%) answered 16 for this question.



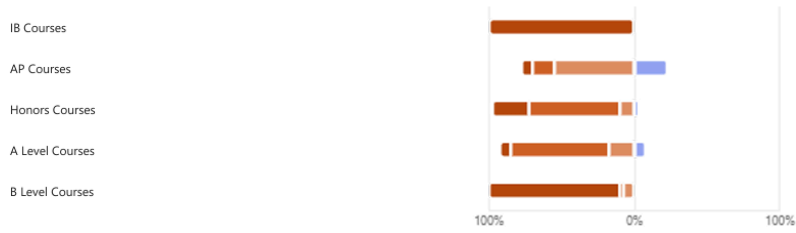
3% of people answered 15 for this question, and the majority answered "Female" for Question 1.



Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

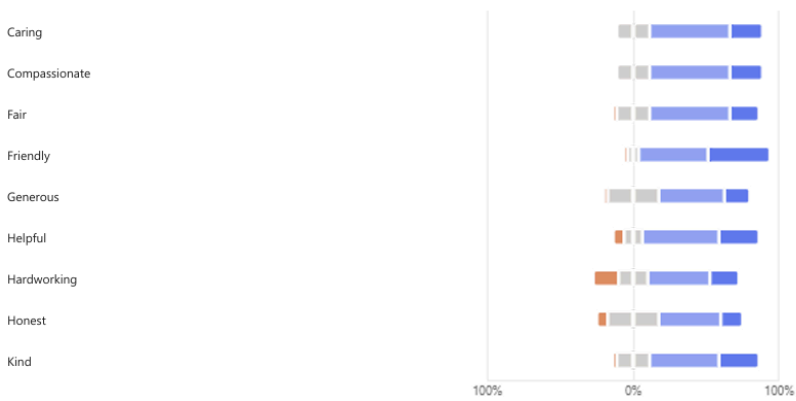
4. Please indicate the relative amount of each class level you have in your course load this year:

None 1-2 3-4 5-6 7+ Prefer not to say



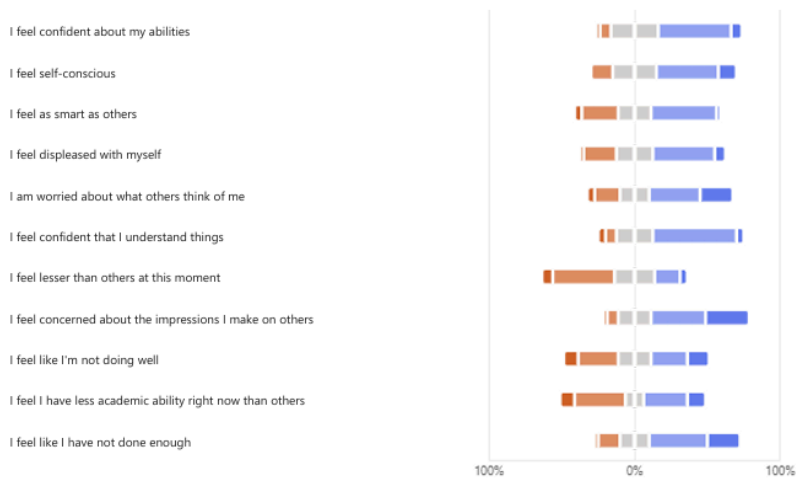
5. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with yourself:

Not at All A Little Partially Mostly Completely



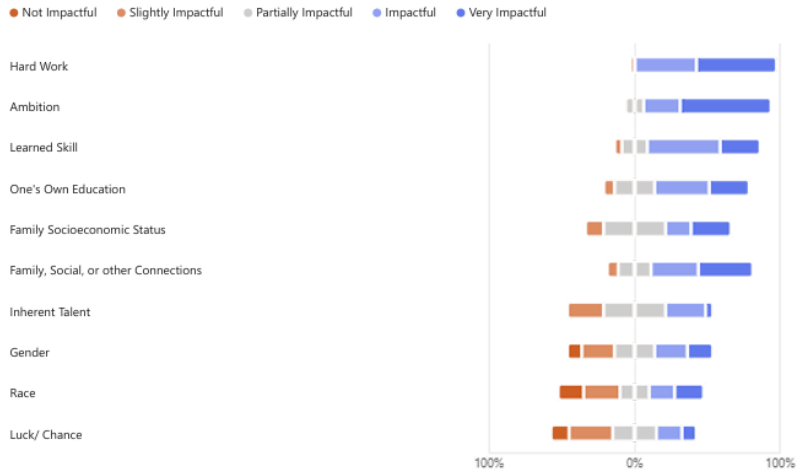
6. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you *currently* feel: (reminder that all answers will be anonymized for data collection)

Strongly Disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly Agree



Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

7. Please indicate how much you believe each of these factors, in general, is impactful for succeeding in American society:



8. Please rate your agreement with the following statements regarding success in school in general:



APPENDIX J: Male and Female In-Person Survey Results

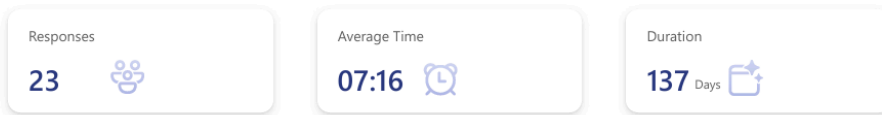
J.1 Female

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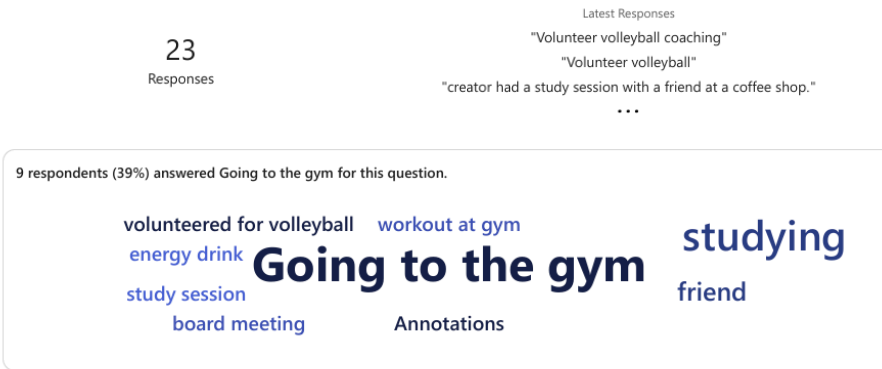
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Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

Responses Overview Active



1. Please list or describe any activity or action the person listed in the video (**cannot** answer "waking up" or "going to bed").



2. Please indicate at what relative time the person woke up.



3. Please indicate how likely you believe a video similar to the one shown might appear on the for you page (FYP) of anyone using a social media platform.



4. Please indicate if you have viewed, on social media, videos similar to the one shown.

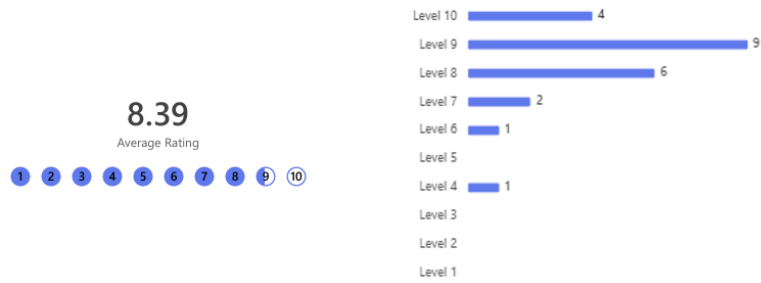


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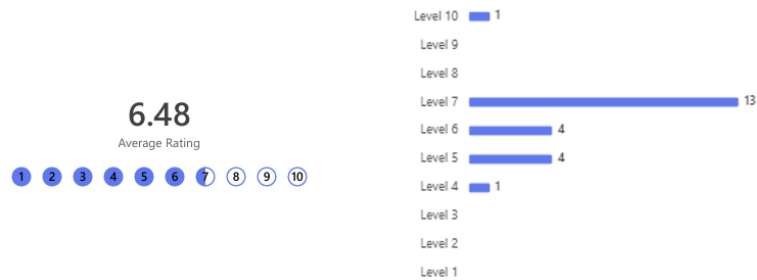
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5. Please indicate how busy you believe **the person depicted in the video** to be on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not busy at all, 10 being extremely busy).

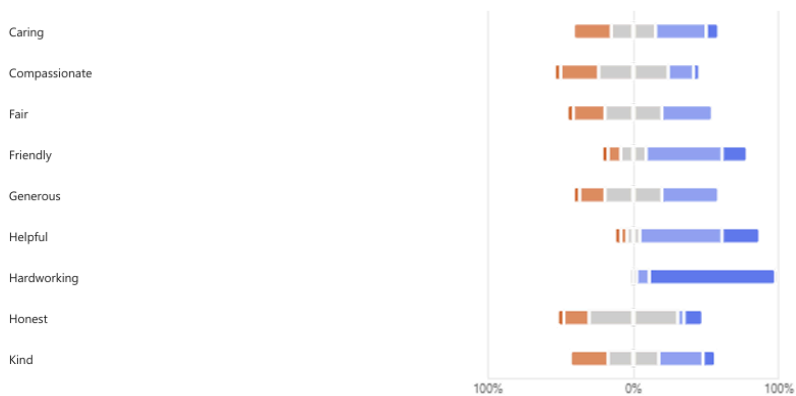


6. Please indicate how busy you believe **yourself** to be on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not busy at all, 10 being extremely busy).



7. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with **the person in the video**:

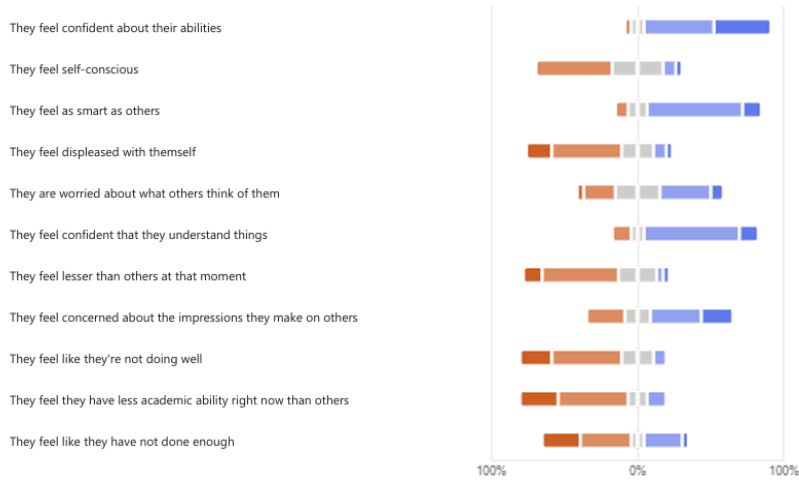
● Not at All ● A Little ● Partially ● Mostly ● Completely



Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

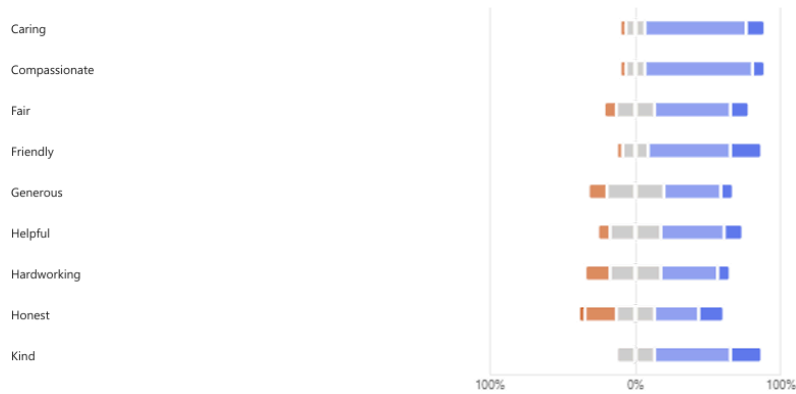
8. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you believe **the person in the video** may have felt:

● Strongly Disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly Agree



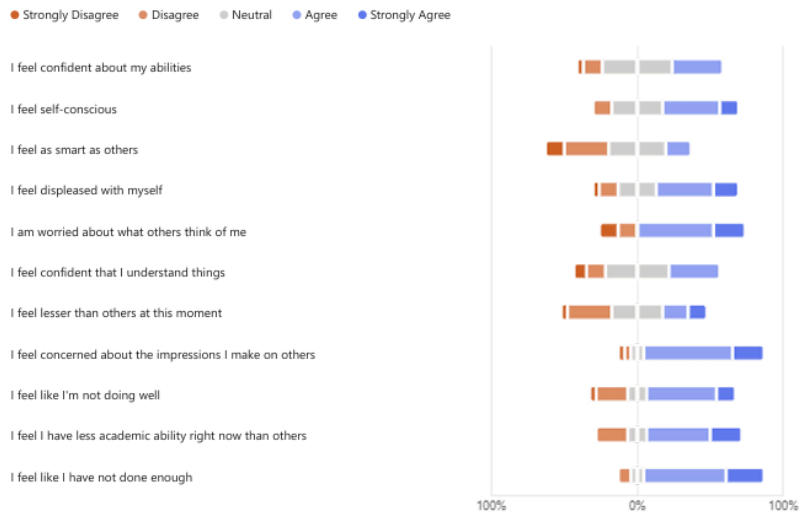
9. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with **yourself**:

● Not at All ● A Little ● Partially ● Mostly ● Completely



Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

10. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you *currently* feel: (reminder that all answers will be anonymized for data analysis).



11. Imagine you hold very high self-worth. Briefly describe what your daily routine might look like. (This answer **does not require** any specific format: it can be bulleted, a paragraph, incomplete sentences, a few words, etc.)

23
Responses

Latest Responses

"Wake up at 6 am. Shower. Go to the gym. Study. Study more. Spend time with fri..."

"I would be super motivated. I would go to gym, study, make healthy food, everyt..."

"- wake up early - motivate myself to exercise before school - make a healthy brea..."

...

8 respondents (35%) answered time for this question.

study/work
daily routine
healthy
Wake up early
bed
work time
sleep
homework
study
school
gym
friends
self-worth

12. Please elaborate why you believe you would hold "very high self-worth" based on your imagined schedule. (Again, no specific format is required)

23
Responses

Latest Responses

"I would prioritize taking care of myself over others. I would prioritize my body we..."

"I think by being motivated and working hard determines my self worth."

"I would feel extremely productive and secure that I am doing the best I can to suc..."

...

5 respondents (22%) answered self-worth for this question.

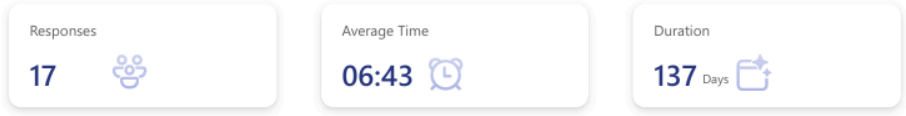
feel academically
security in life
organized life
life style
things
time
working
productive
self-worth
beneficial
working to make myself better
possible
high self
schedule
life
life such as money
high slandered
care
productive lifestyle

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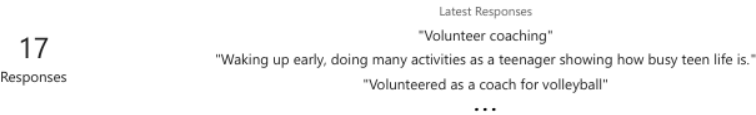
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J.2 Male

Responses Overview Active



1. Please list or describe any activity or action the person listed in the video (**cannot** answer "waking up" or "going to bed").



5 respondents (29%) answered going to the gym for this question.

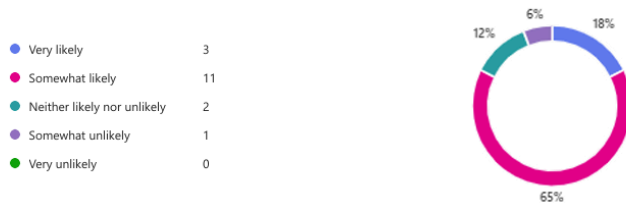


2. Please indicate at what relative time the person woke up.



Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

3. Please indicate how likely you believe a video similar to the one shown might appear on the for you page (FYP) of anyone using a social media platform.



4. Please indicate if you have viewed, on social media, videos similar to the one shown.



5. Please indicate how busy you believe **the person depicted in the video** to be on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not busy at all, 10 being extremely busy).

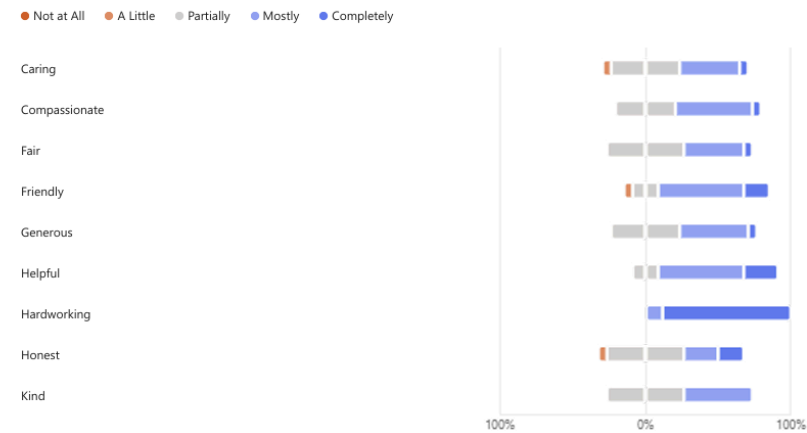


Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

6. Please indicate how busy you believe **yourself** to be on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not busy at all, 10 being extremely busy).



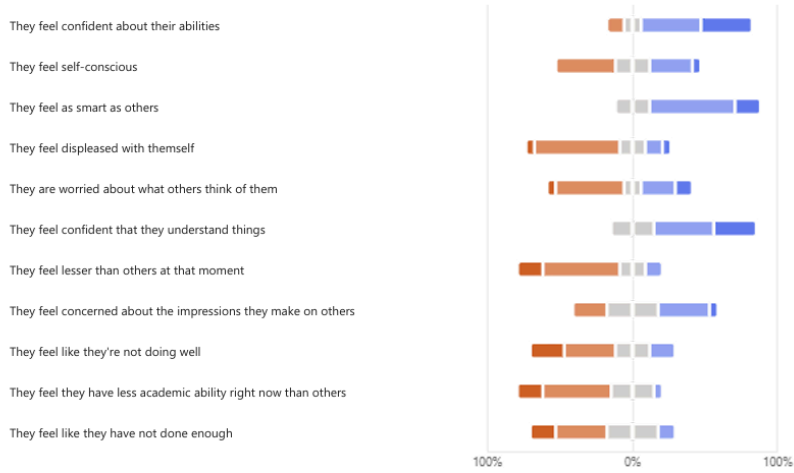
7. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with **the person in the video**:



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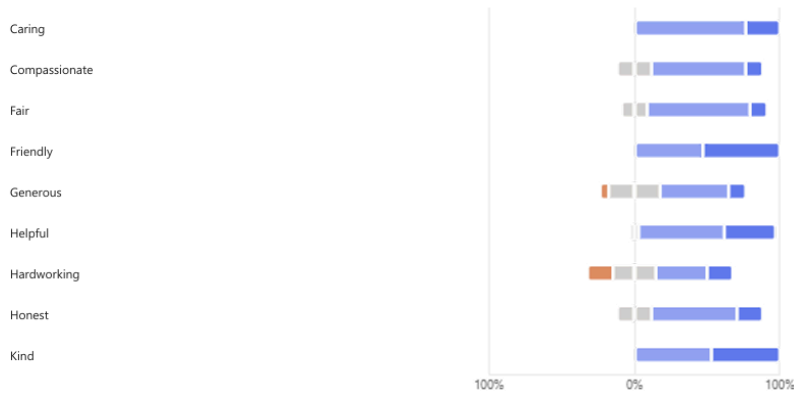
8. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you believe **the person in the video** may have felt:

● Strongly Disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly Agree



9. Below are 9 traits identified in a study as those often held by "morally worthy" individuals. As of presently, please indicate how strongly you believe each trait aligns with **yourself**:

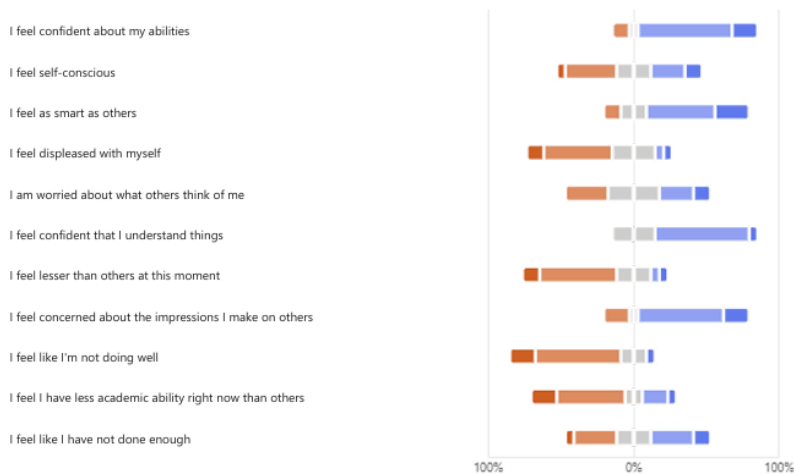
● Not at All ● A Little ● Partially ● Mostly ● Completely



Moralizing Busyness: Correlations Between Meritocratic Beliefs and Busyness-Based Self-Worth Evaluations in Students

10. Please indicate your agreement with each statement as you *currently* feel: (reminder that all answers will be anonymized for data collection).

● Strongly Disagree ● Disagree ● Neutral ● Agree ● Strongly Agree



11. Imagine you hold very high self-worth. Briefly describe what your daily routine might look like. (This answer **does not require** any specific format: it can be bulleted, a paragraph, incomplete sentences, a few words, etc.)

17
Responses

Latest Responses

"My daily routine would look like - working out at some point throughout the day ..."

"Wake up 6:00 Eat breakfast 6:30 School Practice Music Homework Sleep"

"I would focus on getting a good amount of sleep and focus on being physically h..."

...

6 respondents (35%) answered school for this question.

school/study ready ready for the day time ready for school school go exercise Shower study gym and work study and go to bed sleep relatively getting work friends healthy shower/get ready studies and career wake up early school study gym

12. Please elaborate why you believe you would hold "very high self-worth" based on your imagined schedule. (Again, no specific format is required)

17
Responses

Latest Responses

"I think it would just hold me to be more accountable and give me more purpose ..."

"I do many valuable things that I enjoy and I never find myself trying to find slanti..."

"It is a culmination of actions that treat yourself properly ensuring that your body ..."

...

4 respondents (24%) answered self-worth for this question.

busy good self-worth high things waking up early schedule better time

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APPENDIX K: Qualitative In-Person Survey Results

Form ID	Female Responses Q1
1	You focus on yourself like eat a good breakfast, do your homework, go the gym
2	wake up at 6 do my makeup go to school go home work out shower cook dinner study/homework watch some tv go to bed
3	-wake up early -study -work out -eat healthy food -spend time with friends/doing hobbies -go to bed on time
4	Wake up early, get a lot of homework done quickly, free time afterwards
5	Wake up early, go to the gym, spend time with loved ones, study/work, take a break on my phone, study/work more
6	Wake up 5:00 Get ready 5:30 Breakfast 6:15 Reading:620 School;700 Practice 240 Homework: 300 Nonprofit work: 500 shower: 800 Read: 830 sleep: 10
7	With high self-worth, I would probably be doing less than I'm doing now because I'd feel as if I already accomplished a lot.
8	I would be really productive--waking up early, regulating my diet, and actually completing my tasks. I would probably not procrastinate so much.
9	wake up relatively early 7-8, start homework early, be efficient, give my time well to those or things that deserve it, do things that make me happy
10	-waking up at 6am -skincare -going for a jog -eating breakfast -studying -volunteering -cleaning and cooking
11	A busy day including all of my necessary commitments, along with hobbies I enjoy. This day would bring me joy and resources
12	I would wake up early, around 7, to get a full night of sleep. I would start my morning with a good breakfast, then exercise and study, preferably with a friend. I would give myself some down time to rest, before doing chores, and completing work.

- 13 - Wakeup at 6:15 - Skincare + brush my teeth - Go for a run or walk my dog - Make food
- Study - Go to work - Come back from work - Do homework - Tutor - Shower - Cook
dinner - Brush teeth - Sleep
- 14 - Wake up early - go to the gym - make a to-do list - go to school - come home and unpack
- do homework - work on extracurriculars - head to bed before 10pm
- 15 work out, study, eat, friends, break, study, sleep
- 16 If i hold very high self worth i would be more productive and still do all
my extracurriculars without taking naps or getting frustrated about school.
- 17 I would wake up early in the morning and work out. Then I would be locked in on my
schoolwork and do my SAT prep. I would also make sure to go to bed on time.
- 18 I would imagine my daily routine to look very productive and pretty busy, including things
like sports, studying, exercising, and not anything such as doom scrolling, or wasting time.
- 19 I feel like a daily routine where people prioritize themselves and their interests along with
highlighting every aspect of their day shows very high-self-worth. They might start with
working out, then eating breakfast, doing work, hanging out with the friends, and doing
something that they enjoy.
- 20 - Wake up - Workout - Go to school (attend a club meeting or volunteer) - Go to job or
internship - Do homework - Have a meeting for an organization - Do an independent project
(email, writing, applications, stuff to advance myself etc...) - Practice - SAT prep
- 21 - wake up early - motivate myself to exercise before school - make a healthy breakfast - do
some homework so I can get ahead in my classes - go to school --> get there early - deal
with daily school - get home and have a healthy lunch/snack (depending on if I ate lunch at
school) - do all of my homework BEFORE dance - study for any upcoming
tests/SATs/ACT - go to dance - shower and go to sleep
- 22 I would be super motivated. I would go to gym, study, make healthy food, everything
shower, more studying, etc. I would lock in and have at least 3 study sessions a day.
- 23 Wake up at 6 am. Shower. Go to the gym. Study. Study more. Spend time with friends. Go
to bed early.
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Form ID	Female Responses Q2
1	because you are taking care of yourself well, and you care about what you are doing.
2	because i do things that keep me happy and healthy and then i can put more energy into school and others
3	You do activities that are beneficial for your mental and physical wellbeing
4	Because you make sure to prioritize what is important while also leaving time for yourself.
5	I think if I was more structured and organized, life would appear the same way. An organized life style to me is equal to a healthy and happy life.
6	the reason why is because I would not be as distracted with my phone and keep myself busy and productive the whole day with still keeping a balanced schedule
7	Someone with high self-worth is someone I see as egotistical. While it's good to have self-worth, having an excessive amount of self-worth makes you selfish and singleminded.
8	I would hold high self worth based off that schedule because I would be accomplishing more in the same amount of time as I have now. I wouldn't be wasting my time and I'd be actively working to improve myself.
9	some of it is work and how i feel academically, but i think high self worth also encapsulates confidence and allotting your time based on that
10	Because they put their image and health with great importance. They ensure that they maintain and clean routine
11	I am completing all the tasks I need to complete while still having a life outside of it. The tasks I complete bring me security in life such as money or education
12	I would value rest and health just as much as getting things done, not wearing myself too thin
13	Because it would make me feel fulfilled, educated, and productive
14	I want to make my schedule as packed as possible and have no time left in my day.

- 15 Because I want to be successful
- 16 i would be constantly working to make myself better in more than just an academic lens.
- 17 I would have high self-worth because I am locked in on my schoolwork and I hold myself to high standards. By holding myself to this standard I know I will do well.
- 18 Because I think this type of routine would be very beneficial for encouraging productive lifestyle.
- 19 I think this is so because doing things to better oneself and enjoy life demonstrates that people care about themselves and know their value.
- 20 Because I am doing everything possible to achieve potential success in the future.
- 21 I would feel extremely productive and secure that I am doing the best I can to succeed. Sometimes I feel like I am not doing enough to succeed, however, I would feel more secure about my efforts if I had this schedule.
- 22 I think by being motivated and working hard determines my self worth.
- 23 I would prioritize taking care of myself over others. I would prioritize my body well-being.

Form ID	Male Responses Q1
1	I would get up earlier and eat healthier, relatively getting my life together.
2	I believe it would be similar to the video in the way that I would wake up early and keep myself busy with productive things throughout the day.
3	wake up early and study and then go to the gym and then study more then hang out with my friends.
4	wake up shower go to school after school go exercise for football shower homework sleep

- 5 i wake up at 6:30 shower and get ready till 7 go to school till 2:30 workout right after till 5 eat and rest till 7 go to practice at 7:30
- 6 I would wake up early, get to the gym, come home and work on things from school/study. then i would go hang out with friends or go do other things
- 7 - Something like studying a lot, and having a very strict routine.
- 8 Being very productive, similar to the video. Waking up early, exercising, attending school, completing assignments, eating proper meals, proper sleep schedule, etc.
- 9 I would wake up at like 5 and go to the gym and work and then keep myself busy all day and make myself better
- 10 Wake up early, shower/get ready for the day, make myself breakfast, do some homework, study, debrief, shower, get ready for tomorrow, go to sleep.
- 11 -Wake up early -Walk dog -Go to the gym -Go to school -Lock in for schoolwork -Go home -Rest for a sec -See family -Finish homework -Go to violin rehearsal -Go volunteer -Go to bed
- 12 1. Wake up 2. Gym 3. Work 4. Spend time with friends and family 5. Sleep
- 13 Get up like 6. Get ready, go to school, play my sport work out. Shower study and go to bed before 1030
- 14 i wake up get ready for school go to school get back home Take a nap homework volleyball practice eat go to bed
- 15 I would focus on getting a good amount of sleep and focus on being physically healthy, go to the gym, running, making healthy food, reading. I would also focus on my studies and career without procrastinating. Also save time to relax and spend time with friends.
- 16 Wake up 6:00 Eat breakfast 6:30 School Practice Music Homework Sleep
- 17 My daily routine would look like - working out at some point throughout the day - eating a healthy diet - spending time with friends -exercising (playing lacrosse)
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Form ID	Male Responses Q2
1	Keeping myself good is based on how i feel. Its interconnected with my routine and health.
2	I would be significantly more confident in the things that I do
3	because they make time for their friends, school, and personal health.
4	I would since I am a busy person and do everything for the best of my ability and I'm able to push myself for different stuff and continue to do more
5	becuase it is busy and complete with things that benefit me.
6	I think the schedule would be fulfilling and I would feel like I do a lot during the day.
7	Having a strict routine would make me become a better person and things like that.
8	To hold very high self-worth, it also values high self-respect. I view high self-worth in hand with caring about yourself.
9	Because im waking up early and keeping myself productive
10	Based on the schedule, I would hold very high self-worth because I would wake up early enough and do my work early enough to give myself enough time to relax and do nothing rather than procrastinating.
11	This schedule reflects high self-worth because it is jam packed with valuable activities that build towards a better future and community. It also has time for rest, which is very important.
12	It balances work, personal health, and keeping a goof social standing with family and peers.
13	Because I do stuff that is good for me and I don't procrastinate. I also get enough sleep
14	I think that I'm a pretty good guy who will succeed in life
15	It is a culmination of actions that treat yourself properly ensuring that your body and mind are healthy.

- 16 I do many valuable things that I enjoy and I never find myself trying to find slanting to do. I'm very busy and that's how I live my life and I enjoy it. However, I do love my free time when I get it occasionally
- 17 I think it would just hold me to be more accountable and give me more purpose so I can feel better about myself or have "higher self-worth."
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