Hypothesis 1 (Strengths and Identity Development):

- College is a structured period for personal exploration and discovery (Côté, 2006).
- We expected individual differences in character strengths to be positively associated with identity exploration (1a), but we did not expect that strength would be robustly associated with identity commitment (1b).

Hypothesis 2 (Strengths and Well-Being):

- We expected character strengths to be robustly and positively associated with measures of well-being (2a), including personal flourishing, subjective happiness, life satisfaction, and college belonging.
- Given previous findings suggesting that hopefulness is robustly and uniquely tied to well-being when considered alongside other strengths (Manuscript in Preparation), we expected hope in particular to be a consistent and robust predictor of well-being (2b).
- We expected these effects beyond covariates of demographic variables and personality traits (see Hayes & Joseph, 2003).

We recruited 269 undergraduates (M Age = 19.53 years, SD = 1.28; 79.9% women). Most participants identified as White (76.2%), followed by Southeast Asian (7.8%), Multiracial (4.5%), Black (3.0%), Latinx (3.0%), Indo-Asian (2.6%), or American Indian (0.4%). Participants completed standard self-reports of personality traits, character strengths, identity, and well-being as part of a larger, online study. Participants received extra credit for their Psychology courses.

**Results**

Addressing hypothesis 1 (identity development), as expected, curiosity, gratitude, and hope were positively associated with greater identity exploration. Unexpectedly, hope was positively associated with identity commitment.

Addressing hypothesis 2 (well-being), forgiveness, gratitude, and hope were positively associated with multiple reports of well-being. Surprisingly, grit was negatively associated with reports of psychological flourishing.

**Discussion**

Associations of character strengths with identity were tested in two ways:

- Character strengths of curiosity, gratitude, and hope accounted for variance in identity exploration; hope also accounted for variance in identity commitment.
- Identity stage differences in curiosity, gratitude, hope, and forgiveness were also supported. Curiosity distinguished moratorium and foreclosure, whereas gratitude, hope, and forgiveness were notably low in diffusion.

In regard to well-being:

- Surprisingly, curiosity was not associated with any measures of well-being, and grit was negatively related to personal flourishing.
- Though forgiveness and gratitude were also consistently associated with well-being, hope showed the strongest relations to well-being.

Future directions:

- Given hope’s link to both identity and well-being, longitudinal work should examine trajectories of identity development and hope from adolescence through young adulthood.
- Identifying antecedents of hope is also needed.