

THE SELF MONITOR

The Official Alumni Newsletter of the Psychology Department
of the State University of New York at New Paltz

Volume 13 - Summer 2020

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Message from the Department Chair, Dr. Jonathan Raskin



I hope you are healthy and safe during these difficult times. The coronavirus pandemic has upended all of our lives. However, as we look ahead to the Fall semester I want assure everyone that the Department of Psychology is working diligently to serve our students.

The semester won't be business-as-usual and everyone will have to make sacrifices, but I am confident that we will all come together as a community to support one another and make sure that students have a positive educational experience.

We may be facing down a pandemic, but the Department of Psychology continues to persevere and be a vibrant and dynamic place. Allow me to take a moment to share some of the accomplishments of our students and faculty over the past year (and be sure to see page 15 for a list of 2020 student award winners).

- **Gaming Has Psychological Benefits, According to New Research by Dr. Douglas Maynard:** Dr. Douglas Maynard and two of his student researchers, Leah J. Mancini and Vania Rolón, published their findings in *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*.
- **Emeritus Professor Phyllis Freeman Co-Authored Articles on COVID-19 Prevention, Diagnosis, and Treatment:** Emeritus Professor Phyllis Freeman co-authored an article on COVID-19 prevention, diagnosis, and treatment in *Medical Hypotheses*: "Three novel prevention, diagnostic, and treatment options for COVID-19 urgently necessitating controlled randomized trials."
- **Assistant Professor Matthew Wice Published Three Articles:** Assistant Professor Matthew Wice published the following three articles during the 2019-2020

academic year: "Verbal Display Rule Knowledge: A Cultural and Developmental Perspective" in the journal *Cognitive Development*; "Knowing Minds: Culture and Perceptions of Mental State Access" in the journal *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*; and "The Relationship Between Humane Interactions with Animals, Empathy, and Prosocial Behavior among Children" in the journal *Human-Animal Interaction Bulletin*.

- **Dr. Elizabeth Hirshorn Published Article on Unmasking Individual Differences in Adult Reading Procedures:** Dr. Elizabeth Hirshorn, assistant professor of psychology, has published an article titled "Unmasking Individual Differences in Adult Reading Procedures by Disrupting Holistic Orthographic Perception" in PLOS One. The article highlights different underlying reading styles in similarly highly skilled English readers. Uncovering these distinctions in skilled readers may shed light on possible alternative routes to successful reading that could benefit struggling readers.
- **Guidance for Psychotherapists During the Coronavirus Pandemic:** I co-authored this article in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.
- **Dr. Corwin Senko Appointed Director of Student Research for 2020-21:** Provost Barbara Lyman named Associate Professor of Psychology Corwin Senko Director of Student Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (RSCA) for the 2020-2021 academic year.

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- **Dorsky Museum Exhibited Two Works by Department Secretary Jane Lehman:** The Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art has a new virtual exhibit, “Stay Home, Make Art.” The exhibit includes two works by our very own Jane Lehman, psychology department administrative assistant.
- **David Bright Joins Counselor Education Program as Assistant Professor:** The Counselor Education program is pleased to announce that current lecturer David Bright has been hired as an assistant professor starting in Fall 2020. Professor Bright is currently completing his doctorate in counselor education at Penn State. His teaching focuses on counseling skills, theories, and assessment, while his research interests include preparing counselors to work with rural populations, issues of rural cultural identity, and career development.
- **Institute for Disaster Mental Health supported campus COVID-19 response with Psychological First Aid:** The Institute for Disaster Mental Health (IDMH) at SUNY New Paltz shared needed expertise with faculty and staff on Monday, March 23, during a comprehensive training on Psychological First Aid and Stress Management focused on the coronavirus pandemic.
- **Dr. Giordana Grossi’s Workshop in Leiden, The Netherlands:** Giordana Grossi gave a talk titled “In search of a new language: Reconceptualizing and reworking claims of origins” at the recent “Intersectional Analysis of the Sexed/Gendered Brain” workshop at the Lorentz Center in Leiden, The Netherlands (2 – 6 March 2020).
- **Book by Psychology Professor Glenn Geher and MA Psych Alum Nicole Wedberg Makes List of 9 Best New Evolutionary Psychology Books to Read in 2020:** Positive Evolutionary Psychology: Darwin’s Guide to Living a Richer Life, authored by Psychology Professor Glenn Geher and 2016 MA Psychology alum Nicole Wedberg emerged as #3 on bookauthority.org’s list of 9 Best New Evolutionary Psychology Books to Read in 2020. This book, published by Oxford University Press, summarizes various ways that research from evolutionary psychology can help people live richer and more fulfilling lives.
- **High School Counselor and New Paltz Alum Sharrell Matta Celebrated on *Good Morning America*:** Sharrell (Cruz) Matta, who obtained her BA in psychology from SUNY New Paltz in 2004, was recognized by *Good Morning America* for her over-and-above work as a school counselor in NYC at Frederick Douglass Academy II. She and her entire class were invited to join the show for this feel-good recognition event.

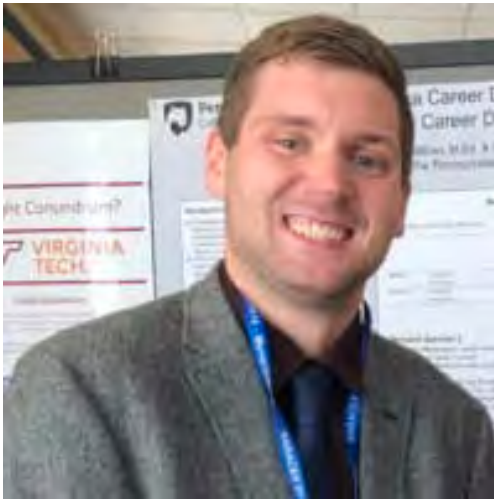


We are extremely proud of our faculty and students and all the incredible work that they do. For more stories about our faculty and students, check out our online news blog at <https://hawksites.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>.

Here’s to the 2020-21 academic year, and to everyone staying safe and healthy. Please keep in touch. If you have an opportunity to drop us a line, we would love to hear from you.

Warmly,
Jonathan D. Raskin, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Psychology

P.S. Would you like to support faculty and student teaching and research initiatives during these trying times? Check out the “Donate Now” button on the Department homepage: <http://www.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>



Welcome to our Newest Full-Time Faculty Member, David Bright!

David Bright is currently a visiting lecturer within the Psychology Department at SUNY New Paltz and is happy to be joining the Counseling program as a full-time assistant professor beginning in Fall 2020. Although his dissertation defense was delayed by COVID-19, he is scheduled to complete his Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from the Pennsylvania State University this fall. Prior to his doctoral studies, David worked as PK-8 school counselor in northern Vermont. His main research interests are rural career development, rural cultural mindsets, and counselor preparation and training. His teaching specialties are school and career counseling specific courses.

David's interest in rural career development comes from his personal and professional experience. Raised in rural poverty, he saw the impact that a lack of resources and services had on himself and others. Without parents who attended college, exposure to a diversity of careers, or any programming linked to expanding career exploration, David went through the process on his own, transferring from the University of Pittsburgh to the University of Scranton where he completed his Bachelor's degrees in History and Philosophy. A career development turn occurred when he was accepted to law school (and stuck deciding between Penn State and UConn) but realized that he wanted a career where he more directly could make a difference in someone's life. Going through several challenging life moments during his college years, therapy proved itself to be an incredible support and helped him realize that counseling was his path. He completed his Master's in School Counseling from the University and went to work in an impoverished community in rural Vermont. The high levels of poverty, trauma, and family substance abuse further showed him the need to explore and advocate for rural schools and communities. This valuable experience also provided him with deeper insight into the complex needs of schools, students, and communities, examples which he brings with him to his teaching. He has several published works regarding rural school counseling in the *Journal of School Counseling* and the *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*.

In his free time, David enjoys reading, creative writing, hiking, fishing, and playing board and video games. He is an avid card player and would love to get an on-going poker night going (post-COVID, of course) with anyone interested. He lives in New Paltz with his wife and is looking forward to further exploring the town and university community.

Professor Corwin Senko is the New Director of Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities

In May 2020, Provost Barbara Lyman named Associate Professor of Psychology Corwin Senko Director of Student Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities (RSCA) for the 2020-2021 academic year. Here is his description of his plans in the role:

The RSCA's purpose is to support undergraduate student-faculty collaborations @ SUNY New Paltz. These collaborations allow the student to work on cutting edge projects within the faculty member's area of expertise. It is an intensive experience: the projects last at least one semester, often longer, spanning from topic generation to project completion. We know from national surveys of college graduates that these

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kinds of opportunities and mentorship can be incredibly valuable for students. And I know from firsthand experience how true that is! So I'm deeply excited, as the new director, to be able to facilitate these collaborations throughout our campus.

The main way we do this is through competitive grants that fund the project's costs. Since last Fall, for example, the RSCA has awarded grants to four psychology majors, Nicole Elyukin, Sergio Lopez, Sarah Pallone, and Cody Wojszynski, to support their projects [see page 12 for descriptions of Nicole and Sarah's work]. Another cool thing we do, after the project is done, is to give students and their mentors travel funds to present their work at scholarly conferences. Those conference experiences are often eye-opening and inspiring for students; many rate them as a major highlight of their entire undergraduate academic experience.

Looking ahead to the next couple years, our main goal is to facilitate more student-faculty collaborations. For example, for many years now, nearly all of our grant applications have come from the Sciences. I'd like to encourage more applications from other disciplines, including Psychology. I also hope to raise the campus visibility of these student-faculty collaborations. Each May, we host the Student Research Symposium, a wonderful celebration of the campus projects completed during the year. We are now looking into additional ways to celebrate and promote these projects year-round. It promises to be an exciting year for us.



Gaming's Psychological Benefits

In a time of global pandemic and societal stress, it's more important than ever to remember the importance of fun! That's the focus of the research Prof. Doug Maynard conducts in his Positive Play Lab, where he and his team of students study play, playfulness, and gaming in adults. Results from a pair of their studies were published in the Summer 2020 issue of the *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*. Dr. Maynard collaborated on this work with two NP Psychology alumna, Leah J. Mancini who is now at New York State Department of Labor - Division of Research and Statistics, and Vania Rolón, who is now at Brunel University London. Here's the abstract of their work:

In the current investigation, we examined the impact of game mode upon changes in subjective vitality, an indicator of well-being marked by feelings of aliveness and energy, as well as negative affect. In Study 1, college students ($N = 106$) in pairs were randomly assigned to play a dexterity-based card game in either a competitive or a cooperative mode. In Study 2, 54 college students played the same game alone in a solo mode. Participants in all 3 conditions experienced a significant increase in subjective vitality ($d = .73, .59$, and $.47$ for the competitive, cooperative, and solo conditions, respectively) and a significant decrease in negative affect ($d = .59, .26$, and $.34$, respectively) after playing the game. In Study 1, there was no significant difference in changes to emotional state between the competitive and cooperative modes of play. Finally, contrary to expectations, more competitive participants did not benefit more than less competitive participants from playing in the competitive mode.

Research in the COVID-19 Era: One Professor's Adaptation

While many Psychology faculty members and their student research teams already used online surveys and other forms of remote data collection before the pandemic, others relied on methods that involved in-person contact with research participants. Given social distancing requirements and the lack of typical access to the student subject pool as a source of live participants, they've been forced to revise their research practices to use creative alternatives. Here's how one faculty member, Assistant Professor Elizabeth Hirshorn, has adapted during the pandemic.

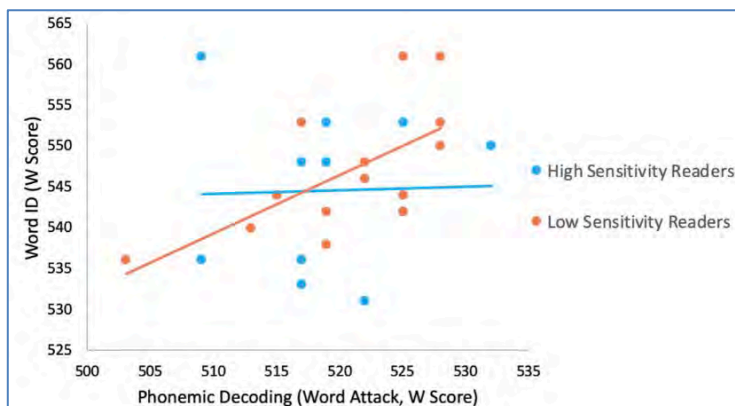


My lab (Diversity in Language Lab - DiLL) uses both behavioral and neuroimaging methodologies to study individual differences in skilled reading. Behavioral testing simply involves having participants do experiments on a computer and recording how fast and accurately they can perform certain tasks. For neuroimaging, we use EEG (electroencephalography), which measures the tiny electrical fluctuations from your scalp while performing one of those behavioral tasks. This involves getting fitted for a cap with electrodes and being hooked up to our system.

While our behavioral testing has historically been done in person in the lab, last summer a student and I started using an online platform (findingfive.com) to convert some of our behavioral tasks so that they can be completed remotely, which has been a huge asset during the pandemic. However, there are definite tradeoffs of making this change. The obvious benefit is that participants can do this wherever and whenever they want, which provides immense flexibility during such a difficult time. Some drawbacks include a reduction in temporal sensitivity in presenting stimuli and collecting reaction times. My equipment in the lab was specifically designed to be extremely accurate. Any online platform is going to be limited to the computer and wifi that a participant has. This is not an issue for all experiments, but it does limit which ones we can get quality data from.

With our current situation, it has not been safe to have students come into the lab to participate in the EEG component of our research as this requires close contact while fitting the cap. Also, with only 25% of classes being taught in person, this puts a huge limit on how many students would even be on campus and willing to participate.

Ultimately, we are moving forward with our research, but we have to adapt to what is currently possible, and plan to return to other lines of research when campus is back to normal.



Correlation between word ID and phonemic decoding in low and high sensitivity readers. (Hirshorn et al., 2020)

You can read about some of Dr. Hirshorn's pre-pandemic research on differences in reading styles in her recently published open-source article:

Hirshorn, E.A., Simcox, T., Durisko, C., Perfetti, C.A., & Fiez, J.A. (2020) Unmasking individual differences in adult reading procedures by disrupting holistic orthographic perception. PLoS ONE 15(5): e0233041.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0233041>

Psychology Alumni Profiles

We always love to hear what our former students accomplish after they leave SUNY New Paltz! Here are updates from several – and next we want to hear from you. Please send your news to geherg@newpaltz.edu, vermeulk@newpaltz.edu, or raskinj@newpaltz.edu to be included in next year's newsletter and in our online news blog: <https://hawksites.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>, which is updated frequently.

Name: Jillian Sucher

New Paltz degree: BS in Psychology with a Concentration in Psychobiology, 2016

MA in Psychology from the New School

Email: suchj238@newschool.edu

Current role: Research Assistant at a Rutgers University neuroscience lab



I graduated from New Paltz with a BS in psychology and a concentration in psychobiology in 2016. It was this institution that exposed me to this niche and concentration, which is now my true passion. It was the supportive psychology department and opportunities available to me that prepared me for further study and a career in psychology. For example, it was here that I became the resident of Psi Chi, the international honor society for psychology, as well as the place where I held my first psychological research assistant position. Also, it was this institution that taught me the importance of creativity, and that creativity is not limited to the fine arts, but it is also the birthplace of the best research theories and methodologies. It was my liberal arts education that taught me to look at and aim for the future and what is right, and not to just pursue what is easy. There is no doubt that New Paltz is a huge contributor to the success I have today.

Right now, I'm transitioning from being a graduate student at the New School for Social Research (NSSR) into a full-time research assistant at Rutgers University. I graduate in May with an MA in psychology and a concentration in Substance Abuse Counseling. At NSSR I am involved in two labs. The first one is called Trauma and Global Mental Health lab. Here, we are working closely with the WHO and NGOs in the Middle East to implement low-cost trauma interventions to assist workers on the front line of humanitarian challenges. Additionally, I study the cognitive components of trauma, such as autobiographical memory specificity, and ways to increase coping self-efficacy. Self-efficacy has been shown to be a strong and low-cost intervention that reduces the impact of psychological trauma.

Additionally, I am also a research assistant in the Safran Center at NSSR. The Safran Center was named after the late Jeremy Safran. Here, first-year Clinical Psychology Ph.D students see clients with a broad range of mental disorders. Over the past two years I have analyzed client data and kept track of client progress. I designed the intake survey and termination survey, and wrote the code that analyzes all the data. I also used this data for my master's thesis in which I used a mixed-model, repeated measures ANOVA to plot the trajectories of clients and investigate factors that predict a positive psychotherapy outcome.

I have recently started a position in a neuroscience lab at Rutgers University. We are investigating COVID-19 self-efficacy, as well as creating neuroscience and psychological models of mental health disorders. We have a shared vision of the future of psychology that includes using these neuroscience models to treat psychological symptoms instead of a diagnosis. The models we create in the lab using rats and humans inform us about individuals, which we aim to generalize in order to improve global mental health. Ultimately, we are using neuroscience and psychological models to inform global leadership and NGOs about psychological interventions that are useful to developing countries.

Psychology Alumni Profiles

Name: Shady Albakry

Degree: BA in Biology and Minor in Evolutionary Studies, 2016

Email: Shadyalbakry@gmail.com

Current Position: Research Assistant at Weill Cornell Medicine

Being an adult is hard. It's an entirely different beast to conquer than college but with time, you'll find your way. I graduated from SUNY New Paltz just over four years ago, which feels like a surreal experience these days. Those four years at SUNY New Paltz have helped shape me into the person I am today. I come from Queens, NY and before college, I lived in a mental bubble. I had opinions that I viewed as facts and beliefs with no basis. When you're a kid, your world view can be constantly altered to fit the narrative of a situation and you lack the immediate environment to better educate yourself on those world views. SUNY New Paltz offers that environment.



SUNY New Paltz brings together individuals from all sectors of the world, fostering values of community and cultural relativism. Some of my most engaging courses were my psychology courses. I was able to, and encouraged to, view the world from a different scope, one that appreciated the understanding of cognitive processes and interpersonal interactions. I majored in Biology so getting another perspective on the world complemented the science I was learning. These days, I work as a research assistant at Weill Cornell Medicine. A lot of my daily interactions are centered around patient care. It's a dynamic environment, but one that I enjoy immensely since I'm constantly on the tip of my toes. Ultimately, I want to attend medical school and work towards rectifying the disproportionate medical care provided to those underserved and help those uninsured get the quality care they need. A large credit goes to SUNY New Paltz for helping me identify what I value and providing me a base to attain the skills required to achieve those goals.

The future is uncertain, it always is, but use that uncertainty to your advantage. Educate and tolerate others. Mold that uncertainty into the change that you want to see in this world, now more than ever. It won't be easy, you'll suffer before you excel, but when you do, fall back on your education. Fall back on your values and I promise, you'll find your way.

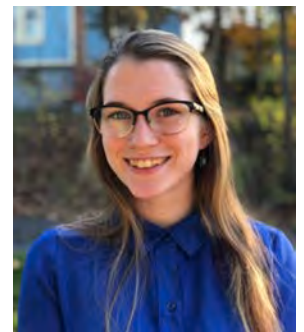
Name: Allisen Casey

Degree: BA in Industrial/Organizational Psychology with a minor in Business Administration, December 2019

Email: allisencasey@gmail.com

Current Position: Recent graduate, starting graduate school in 2021

Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, I am currently seeking a Human Resources entry-level position. I spend a few hours each day engaging on LinkedIn and applying to relevant jobs that would help build my expertise in the field of I/O Psychology.



Come January, I will be joining Baruch College in Manhattan for their Masters Program in Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

As a recent graduate from SUNY New Paltz, much of where I am today is owed to New Paltz. SUNY New Paltz offered me informative classroom lectures, inspiring discussions with professors, the opportunity to befriend some of the most intellectual peers I could have imagined, and ultimately, provided the space for really great academic groups to flourish.

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Psychology Alumni Profiles

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One of my favorite things about SUNY New Paltz is the Honors Program. Through this membership, I was able to select seminars that spoke to me and learn about diverse ideas that came from disciplines outside of psychology. Their mandatory Senior Honors Thesis was also the push I needed to embark on conducting and presenting my own unique research study, "Flow and Productivity." Additionally, I was able to earn credit for studying abroad in Germany, a dream that was born after my first foreign language class during my Freshman year.

I would also like to express my gratitude for the valuable guidance that the Career Resource Center has given me. By my senior year, I was practically a daily visitor for the ladies and gentlemen who offer resources to find community service, conduct mock job-interviews, and read through countless drafts of my personal essays and resumes. Thanks to them, I feel confident in my ability to create a clean and informative resume and cover letter, and thus feel confident in entering the job market. Thank you for the great experience, SUNY New Paltz.

Name: Joyce Akinmola

Degree: BA in Industrial/Organizational Psychology, 2018

Email: joyce.akinmola@suny.edu

Current Position: Graduate student, University at Albany

Hello, my name is Joyce Akinmola. I'm currently a second-year graduate student pursuing a Masters in Public Administration at the University at Albany with a concentration in education policy. At the same time, I'm also a graduate assistant at the SUNY SAIL Institute, which is responsible for creating innovative leadership and development programs for faculty, staff and students in SUNY. I work with a great team and assist in the facilitation and design of in-person and online leadership and development programs.



During my time at New Paltz, I majored in Industrial-Organizational (I-O) Psychology. The idea of being able to study workplace dynamics and organizational structures was interesting to me and scary at the same time. This was because it was a new major at New Paltz and a fairly new field. However, after taking Organizational Psychology with Dr. Citera my worries were lessened. The topics I learned such as leadership, ethics, motivation, and organizational development proved to be helpful in the positions I held at the time as a student assistant and public relations officer on campus and even today. I also had the privilege of working under Dr. Citera and Dr. Geher, which allowed me to develop my communication, interpersonal, and research skills. All these experiences would prepare me for my current graduate studies. The Psychology Department helped guide me through my undergraduate years and allowed me to see the many paths that can be opened to me with a Psychology degree. I also learned that just because something wasn't established doesn't mean I couldn't establish it myself.

During my junior year at New Paltz, I developed an interest in education systems through my study abroad internship in South Korea. I was also able to witness education within the criminal justice system from working at a non-profit organization, Project M.O.R.E. Combined with working with students in higher education and being a student myself, this strengthened my interest. After completing my current degree, I hope to work in a government or international-based organization that helps with education reform and to develop new ways of learning for students from different backgrounds or demographics.

Psychology Alumni Profiles

Name: Monica Schneider

Degree: BA in Psychology, Minor in Disaster Studies, 2017

Email: Schneiderm696@gmail.com

Current Position: Local Coordinator, Council on International Educational Exchange

When I think about my time attending New Paltz, I feel deep gratitude for the relationships I have developed and sustained post-graduation. I felt supported by faculty while I was a student, and that support has not dwindled since I have begun my professional journey. I graduated in 2017 as a Psychology Major and Disaster Studies Minor.

After graduation, I fulfilled my wanderlust and drove cross country. The end goal was San Diego, CA, where I had accepted an Americorps position working in land conservation. I primarily worked in areas where wildfires had damaged the land. Having grown up in the Northeast, it was the first time I had witnessed the aftermath of a disaster I was so unfamiliar with. My crew built fences to barricade the damaged forest areas, with the hope of revegetation and new growth. Although I loved working with the land, like many humans that gravitate towards the psychology field, I missed working with people. I accepted a job working as a wilderness therapy guide for True North Wilderness Program in Waitsfield, VT. As a lead guide, I was in charge of seven adolescent or young adult students for eight days in a row. I worked closely with the therapists to strategize and develop a plan for each student. I used the wilderness setting to push certain behavioral patterns and help students foster healthy relationships and leadership skills. I absolutely loved my work and watching my students transform during their three months of wilderness therapy.

Currently, I am working for an organization called CIEE (Center for International Educational Exchange). I work with high school international students and recruit families to host them for five to ten months. My main role is to help facilitate communication between the students and host families when cultural barriers arise. I am in the midst of applying to graduate school at Tulane University in New Orleans and I am incredibly excited. The program is a dual masters in social work and disaster resilience and leadership. Earning my degree at New Paltz prepared me for all the work I have done and will continue to do. I learned de-escalation skills through volunteering at Oasis, which I used daily as a wilderness therapy guide. The Psychological First Aid skills I learned from Dr. Nitza and Dr. Vermeulen have helped me greatly as well. My senior seminar on cross-cultural psychology opened my eyes to what population I feel most passionate working with. Dr. Holmes understood that passion and offered so much support and insight for avenues on how to pursue a career. She also gave me a once in a lifetime opportunity of traveling to India with her last summer.

My hope is to one day work with international organizations and help educate communities who have suffered from disasters in order to make the relief work ongoing and sustainable. Thanks SUNY New Paltz!

Update: Since submitting this bio, Monica learned that she was accepted into Tulane University's Online Master of Social Work and Master of Science in Disaster Resilience Leadership Dual Degree Program, which she is excited to begin in Fall 2020!



Name: Gabriella Cianci

Degree: BA in Psychology, Minor in Disaster Studies, 2020

Email: ciancig1@hawkmail.newpaltz.edu,

Current position: Soon-to-be graduate student

Right now I am finishing the last of my undergraduate courses, interning and volunteering for the American Red Cross remotely in two regions, working and preparing for graduate school. I am also the President of the Undergraduate Psychology Association, helping to get it recognized as a club on campus once again. This upcoming Fall, I will be attending The City College of New York's Mental Health Counseling program, where I will be for the next two years. I am confident and motivated to start the last part of my academic journey so that I can provide care to those in need. My long-term goal is to counsel clients who experienced a disaster, as well as help create an improved intervention model to replace the current Critical Incident Stress Debriefing used to give short-term support to disaster survivors.

This would not have happened without the help of the Psychology faculty at SUNY New Paltz, as well as the support from my peers. The curriculum challenged

me and made me think about other factors beyond the surface level that impact care, such as SES, race, gender, etc. Thank you once again to everyone at New Paltz who helped make this happen, especially Dr. Geher, Dr. Wice, and Dr. Evans.



Name: Alexander S. Mackiel Jr.

Email: mackiela1@newpaltz.edu

Current Position: New Paltz M.S. Psychological Sciences Graduate Student and T.A., Psych Statistics

My name is Alex Mackiel. While I completed my undergraduate education at Carleton College in Minnesota, I am entering my second year of the M.S. in psychological sciences program here at SUNY New Paltz and will be graduating in May 2021. This summer I applied and was accepted to be a research assistant for Harvard University's "Culture, Cognition, Coevolution Lab," the lab of Dr. Joseph Henrich (the WEIRD guy) within the Department of Human Evolutionary Biology. I am assisting in an online capacity and will hopefully continue to do so throughout graduate school. I am assisting with a large-scale research project a couple of Dr. Henrich's post-doc researchers are leading, which is creating a global database of story. And so, we are collecting and cataloging stories and myths from a range of cultures across different types of society including hunter-gatherer, horticulturist, and pastoralist societies. The goal of the research is to use the database not only to identify global patterns in story, but also to get systematic information about psychology and society across diverse cultural contexts. After creating the database I have plans for hopefully cross-cultural patterns in morality, coordination, and social norms of cooperation.



Name: Zachary Rausch

Email: rausch.zach@gmail.com

Current Position: New Paltz M.S. Psychological Sciences Graduate Student and T.A.

Since March of 2020, I have been working as the virtual research assistant to an academic hero of mine: the NYU Social Psychologist, Jonathan Haidt. Haidt is renowned for his work on the evolution of morality and on examining and mending the growing political divides and cultures in the United States. My job entails constructing and updating literature reviews on various social psychological topics and editing/updating his websites (including creating his new YouTube channel!). I am also in contact and working with staff from YourMorals.org, a large-scale online research platform designed to study various facets of morality and Ethical Systems, an organization designed to help cultivate ethical business cultures around the world. In the coming future, I am also hoping to support Haidt in various research papers and data analysis.



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The path to this job was long and uncertain, but was a direct result of the trust and graciousness of my professors at SUNY New Paltz. Specifically, in the fall of 2018, I was given an opportunity that changed everything. Without a background in research or even a formal course in Psychology, Dr. Glenn Geher of the Psychology department put his faith in me and allowed me to join his Evolutionary Psychology research lab. One afternoon, in lab, I heard an idea that captivated me. The idea emerged as a result of a provocative lecture given by Jonathan Haidt at SUNY NP about two years earlier. Haidt was investigating a few seemingly simple questions. One: "What is the telos (i.e., the primary function) of the university?" Two: "Is that telos changing?" Three: "If so, why?" Haidt then provocatively made the case that many universities have been generally moving away from the traditional telos of truth-seeking to the modern prioritization of social justice seeking. As a student who had taken many courses in various areas of higher education including sociology, history, chemistry, and now psychology, I knew that there was important nuance in these claims. But I also felt that he was onto something. With the support of the Evolutionary Psychology lab (who had already been looking at the values of university professors), I began investigating these questions in my own way. About two years later, and after being accepted and completing three semesters in the Masters of Psychological Science program, I published a synopsis of my research on the educational values of American university students as a guest writer on Dr. Geher's Psychology Today blog. Days later, I was contacted by the man who inspired my work: Jonathan Haidt, thanking me for the research I was doing. Shocked and astounded by the recognition, I thought I could do no better. A few days later however, from the advice of, well, who else but my mother, I decided to send him my resume and cover letter with dim hope that anything could come of it... And the rest is history!

New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Students Present at Heterodox Psychology Conference in California

In January 2020 – before travel shut down – Prof. Glenn Geher and a group of students from his Evolutionary Psychology Lab and Fall 2019 Advanced Research in Evolutionary Psychology class went to Orange, CA to attend the second biennial Heterodox Psychology Conference. The New Paltz contingent was the largest group at the event, and they delivered multiple presentations. Dr. Geher led workshops on Fostering Communication and Networking among Heterodox Researchers and, with Dr. Richard Redding (Chapman University), on Developing a Research Agenda for Studying Meta-Heterodox Issues. Graduate student Julie Planke led a workshop on Curricula and Mentoring: Bringing Heterodoxy to Undergraduates and Prospective Graduate Students as well as delivering a paper on her study, Examining Gender Salience in Preschoolers Through a Category Formation Task in the section on Gender and Sexuality. Grad student Alex Mackiel presented on research from Dr. Geher's lab, Darwin, Jesus and GMOs: An Empirical Assessment of Attitude Changes in the Face of Scientific Evidence, and grad student Jacqueline Di Santo presented on Open-Minded Psychology: How to Best Frame Intellectual Pluralism in the Behavioral



Sciences. Undergraduate students also got in on the act: Amelia De Jesus, Aliza Santos, Kelly Nolan, and Cody Wojszynski presented on a research project called the Betrayal Study that was developed during their Fall course with Dr. Geher. They're now hoping to turn their presentation, Betrayal, Outrage, Guilt, and Forgiveness: The Four Horsemen of the Human Social-Emotional Experience, into a publication.

According to student Amelia De Jesus, "the 2020 Heterodox Psychology Conference in Southern California was a wonderful experience across the board for participants from SUNY New Paltz. We look forward to helping to organize and participate in the next one."

Student Summer Research Awards

Two Psychology students won SURE grants in 2020, which fund faculty-mentored scholarship during the summer. They describe their research projects, and how they managed to collaborate with their faculty mentors remotely. Congratulations to Sarah and Nicole for winning these grants!



Sarah Pallone, left, and Nicole Elyukin, right

Sarah Pallone: This summer, I have been working closely with Dr. Corwin Senko on a meta-analysis to observe the effects different goals have on student outcomes. This is the first time I have ever done a meta-analysis, which is a study that examines patterns of results from past studies. Our particular project is focused on experiments done by manipulating motivational states of its subjects. From searching for the articles to coding them, there are a lot of important discussions involved. I have spent most of my time reading and rereading the nearly 200 articles looking for answers to specific questions we are interested in, like how each manipulation was worded, what tasks were used, and how the dependent variables were measured. Doing this work during the pandemic has made it quite a unique experience. The hardest part for me was to acclimate to using different parts of my house for research, instead of the library and other campus locations that I would have typically been utilizing. Dr. Senko and I meet using video calls three times a week, which are usually filled with lots of questions and further training opportunities. I have been very lucky to be mentored by a professor who is very patient and knowledgeable in the subject. I have learned some valuable lessons along the way, such as what information to include when writing up my own research and where to look when reading for specific types of information. We hope to contribute to the field with our meta-analysis and pave the way for future research.

Nicole Elyukin: This summer, I have been working on my Honors Thesis project under the Summer Undergraduate Research Experience (SURE) program with Dr. Tabitha Holmes. My thesis encompasses two studies which are aimed at understanding experiences with social media. For the first study, I created a survey including measures of self-esteem, self-monitoring, personal versus social identity, and frequency of social media use. I plan on using the participant data to analyze any relationships between the personality measures and the tendencies to use various social medias such as Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, etc.

The second study is more of a case study specifically for users of both Instagram and Finsta. ("Finsta" stands for "Fake-Instagram" and refers to a second Instagram account.) This summer, I have conducted 11 interviews regarding individuals' experiences of using both an Instagram and a Finsta account. The interview questions sought to discover why participants choose to use two separate accounts, how and why they present themselves differently on each account, and how they interpret the experience of using these accounts. I am currently in the process of coding these interviews with Dr. Holmes. I hope to be able to tie the two studies together by relating the personal characteristics associated with users of Instagram and Finsta to patterns across their experiences.

While I never originally imagined working on this project remotely, I was lucky in that I was able to adapt relatively quickly by conducting all my interviews over Zoom. I feel that more people decided to participate because so many had been more isolated due to the pandemic. The role that Instagram is currently playing within the context of a global pandemic and expanding political and social activism came through in some of the interviews and this really helped me understand how research is directly tied to the context it being conducted within. The ways in which technology and social media affects our lives and behaviors is constantly changing and working on this project has taught me how important it is for researchers to adapt to change and produce relevant and updated academic work.

Studying Disaster Response During a Disaster: Minor Students Pivot from International to Local Work

Since the Disaster Studies Minor began, one of the most involved and rewarding experiences that these students have engaged in is the field work of the Disaster Practicum course. This course is the capstone requirement for the Disaster Studies Students and consists of working with local disaster management agencies such as the American Red Cross and County Emergency Management Departments. In recent years, this experience has expanded to include travel opportunities for our students in order to provide relief for disasters occurring outside of New York. Through this program, New Paltz students have assisted in recovery efforts in Texas following Hurricane Harvey and in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria in 2018 and 2019.

In September of 2019, one of the most powerful hurricanes ever recorded in the Atlantic Ocean, Hurricane Dorian, made landfall in the Bahamas. Soon after the storm moved past and the damage was beginning to be assessed, the Institute for Disaster Mental Health Director, Dr. Amy Nitza, began talks with the nonprofit organization All Hands and Hearts, who were already on the ground assisting in the recovery. After advertising this opportunity to our students in the minor, eight of them jumped at the chance to take three weeks of their summer to assist with the recovery efforts in Grand Abaco in the Bahamas. As the Spring 2020 semester began, we started to meet with these students to discuss the type of work that they would be doing, what to expect once we got there, and how to prepare to work in a culture that was different from their own. One idea that we really stressed to these students was how disasters can happen everywhere, to anyone, and can take many different forms. This quickly became apparent as cases of COVID-19 began to rise throughout New York and the world.

As part of the effort to slow infection rates and to protect the safety of our students, the relief trip to the Bahamas had to be cancelled. However, this also offered a new opportunity for our students to assist in efforts to support local communities in facing the challenges relating to COVID-19 and social distancing. Through a partnership between the Institute for Disaster Mental Health and the local Neighbor to Neighbor program, which was developed by the Village Trustees in New Paltz to make check-in calls on residents, these students – Brynne Augustine, Chelsea Carter, Ann DeAngelis, Leah DiPisa, Jaclyn Herer, Shannon Kincade, and Kylee Kresge – rose to the opportunity to help those in their community by providing resources and compassionate conversations to those who they connected with, all despite the challenges associated with finishing the school semester online. Although challenging given the circumstances, these students showed the type of resilience and drive that is ultimately needed in responding to disasters of all types.

Over the next few semesters, we hope that we'll be able to bring our students on relief trips to assist areas affected by disasters again. Whatever the future brings, we know that regardless of the circumstances that we may find ourselves in, our Disaster Studies Minor students will be there to rise to the occasion and face any challenges that arise to support those who need assistance.

- Andrew O'Meara, IDMH Graduate Assistant



Fun fact: The majority of the Institute for Disaster Mental Health staff members are SUNY New Paltz Psychology Alumni! Deputy Director Karla Vermeulen (also an Associate Professor in the Psychology Department) got her MA here in 2005. Program and Operations Manager Rebecca Rodriguez is a double alum, graduating with a Psychology Major and Disaster Studies Minor in 2011 and her MS in Mental Health Counseling in 2014. And Kelsey Valencia, Program Coordinator for the new Student Psychological Resilience Project, just completed her MA in Psychology in 2020. Learn more about the Disaster Studies Minor and the work of the institute at newpaltz.edu/idmh.

New Student Psychological Resilience Project Developed to Support the Campus Community

As strong and energetic as SUNY New Paltz students are – as evidenced by all of the activities described in this newsletter – it's also true that many college students were struggling with multiple stressors and causes for anxiety, even before the pandemic disrupted their lives. Emerging adults were already grappling with societal issues such as institutionalized racism, financial challenges, and an unrelenting negative news stream, and now many are also living through multiple losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic – of traditional classes, of jobs and internships, of typical developmental experiences, of opportunities, and for some, of family members.

To address the resulting stress, the **Student Psychological Resilience Project** was developed thanks to the support of SUNY New Paltz alumnus Ira Schreck '74 and Barbara Ginsberg, who have joined in partnership with SUNY New Paltz to foster student mental health, well-being, and success. This program, which will be rolled out to the campus community beginning in Fall 2020, is intended to address student stress and distress using a peer-to-peer outreach and education approach that will complement other resources on campus like the Psychological Counseling Center and Oasis/Haven. It will be overseen by personnel from the Institute for Disaster Mental Health, who spent the Summer training a team of "Student Resilience Advocates" in topics including stress reactions, Psychological First Aid, Stress Inoculation, and productive coping strategies. This group is now collaborating as a team to develop training materials tailored to student-specific needs, including a social media campaign and more traditional training activities, which they'll disseminate to their peers throughout the academic year. Ultimately, the project seeks to provide all SUNY New Paltz students with the resources and skills needed to cope with the multiple challenges they face, in order to build a foundation for their future personal, academic, and professional success.

The 11 students on the Student Resilience Advocate team come from a variety of majors throughout SUNY New Paltz, but four are connected to the Psychology Department. Brianna LeFever received her BA in Psychology with a minor in Sociology in 2017, and she's currently a second year School Counseling graduate student. Bianca Garcia is a second year graduate student in the Mental Health Counseling program. Caitlin Pastore just graduated from New Paltz in May 2020 with a major in Communication Studies and a minor in Psychology, and she'll begin the graduate program in School Counseling in the Fall 2020 semester. And Fall 2020 will be Caroline Guthrie's final semester as a Psychology Major with a Minor in Disaster Studies; Caroline's work on the project will serve as her Disaster Practicum experience. These four, along with the other seven Student Resilience Advocates from different programs, are going to be a real asset to a campus community that currently needs all of the resilience and stress management skills we can get!

**Follow the Student Psychological Resilience Project's
work on Twitter and Instagram:**

@np_resilience



From top to bottom: Student Resilience Advocates Brianna LeFever, Bianca Garcia, Caitlin Pastore & Caroline Guthrie

Congratulations to Our Psychology Students on these 2020 Accomplishments!

Spring 2020 Psi Chi Inductees: Logan Bennett, Rebecca Costanza, Brittany Eickler, Samantha Fairchild, Emily Fox, Jessica Gdoviak, Adina Gutierrez, Shannon Kincade, Emilia Lisiecki, Emily Llewellyn, Alexander Mackiel, Daniel Mancini, Darcy Montana, Sophia Poznahovska, Amanda Pruss, Ana Rosas Ledesma, Carly Sandstrom, Aliza Santos, Annie Sung, Camilla Trischetti, Morgan Unger, Jacqueline Waters, Madeleine Ziegelhofer

Spring 2020 Psychology Students of Excellence

Those marked with an asterisk were also nominated for the the President's Outstanding Student Award

Undergraduate:

Jacqueline Aftyka
Nikoleta Alijaj
Brynne Augustine
*Samantha Casanova
Gabiella Cianci
Luciano Dumola
Brittany Eickler
Brianna Fachin
Rebeca Gonzalez
Samuel Halligan
Sydney Huppert
Benjamin Jay
Lucinda Judson
Isabela Koldys
Danielle Kruchowy
Rachel Lessick
*Emilia Lisiecki
Pamela Loperena
Amber Lundberg
Delaney Malak
Dan Mancini
Alicia Moquin
Allison Morris
Kelly Nolan
Theresa Paras

Emely Pena
Gianna Petrera
Quincy Portman
Amanda Pruss
Caitlyn Pyne
*Mckenzie Quinn
Baylee Spackman
Alisha Styles
George Sullivan
Cody Wojszynski
Madeleine Ziegelhofer

Graduate:

Linda Beezer
Mariah Hoffman
Carol Majewski
Sophie Perkins
*Laura Rinaldi
Alexa Sauro
Ali Fischer
*Carina Saint Louis
Hunter Berg
*Jacqueline Di Santo
Ale Moss
Keith Racioppo

2020 Psychology Scholarship Winners:

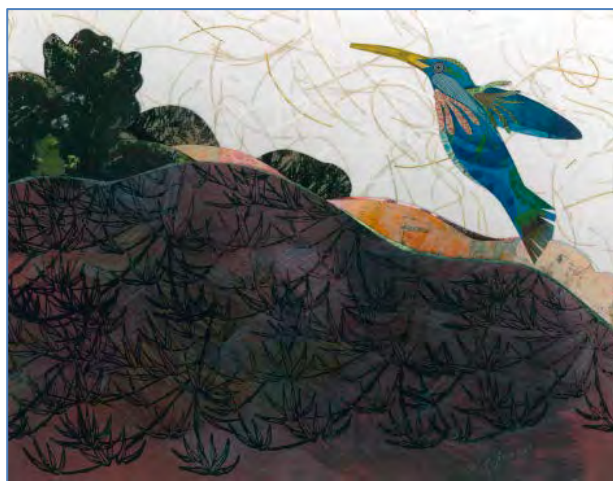
Richard Panman Scholarship: Shannon Kincade
Donald Schiff Scholarship: Melissa Greiser

COVID Creativity: Psychology Department Administrative Assistant Jane Lehmann is a talented collage artist who created these works during the shutdown. They were featured in the college's Samuel Dorsky Museum of Art's virtual exhibit, "Stay Home, Make Art."



Left: "Sheltering with Humming-birds," a tribute to Jane's father.

Below: "Carrying Loving Kindness to Bobby," which Jane made for a friend.



Pre-register for the 2020 virtual Alumni Reunion:
<https://www.newpaltz.edu/reunion-2020>

What are YOU up to? Please send your news to geherg@newpaltz.edu, vermeulk@newpaltz.edu, or raskinj@newpaltz.edu to be included on the department website and in next year's newsletter.

And you can follow department news at any time in our online blog:
<https://hawksites.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>