

THE SELF MONITOR

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

Volume 16 - Summer 2023

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Dr. Karla Vermeulen (vermeulk@newpaltz.edu)

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Message from the Department Chair, Dr. Jonathan Raskin

Greetings from SUNY New Paltz! As usual, our faculty and students have been busy this year. I encourage you to read the newsletter for the many updates on what we have been up to. I am very proud of our many accomplishments!

We have one departure and two introductions to make since last summer. As for the departure, Ann Marie DeBonis, who was our administrative assistant in Fall 2022, left us for greener pastures at the end of the fall term. We wish her well in future endeavors and look forward to remaining in touch with her.

The first new face I'd like to introduce is Kanjira Rodriguez, a graduate of our MS in psychology program. Kanji is our new department administrative assistant. She has been a welcome addition to the main office. Her enthusiasm is infectious, and her efficiency is impressive!

We also are pleased to introduce our newest faculty member, Dr. Maria Félix-Ortiz, who joins us as a lecturer after a distinguished tenure at the University of the Incarnate Word. Dr. Félix-Ortiz has experience teaching many different classes and will be a wonderful addition to the department.

One notable alum update: This past year, the department reconnected with Dr. Stew Friedman, an alum of our graduate program. After going on to earn his Ph.D. in I/O psychology, Dr. Friedman went on to a highly distinguished career as a professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. Now retired, he generously wants to give back to New Paltz, which helped launch his career. To that end, he will be offering a two-part training to all interested faculty and staff this fall, entitled "Total Leadership: Be a Better Leader, Have a Richer Life." I am already signed up to attend!

If you are an alum, like Dr. Friedman, and wish to come back to campus or share with us the latest goings on in your life, please don't hesitate to reach out. If you like, we can even share what you're up to in our online news blog. Feel free to email me (raskinj@newpaltz.edu) or Kanji (rodriguk15@newpaltz.edu) to get in touch.

While donations of any amount to the Department Fund are always appreciated (<http://www.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>), there are many other ways to give back. If you have ideas or wish to discuss how you'd like to do so, don't hesitate to contact us. We'd love to hear from you!

Enjoy the rest of summer.

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

Special Feature: Interview with Renowned Alumna, Robin Cohen-La Valle

In a well-deserved move that will be a great loss to the SUNY New Paltz community, Psychology Alumna and Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students Robin Cohen-La Valle will retire at the end of July. Before she leaves, Glenn Geher interviewed her to capture some highlights of her long tenure at the university.



GG: Robin, I feel so lucky to have gotten to work with you in various capacities over the years! How about we start with you talking about your education from the SUNY New Paltz Psychology Department. What degrees did you obtain and what were some highlights from your education?

RC-L: My degrees:

- Bachelor of Arts in Psychology - 1977 (Double Major - contract major in Communication: Language, Culture & Society)
- Master of Arts in Psychology - 1982 Two Concentrations: One in Counseling; One in Industrial/Organizational Behavior
- Doctoral studies: Educational Policy and Leadership (2000-2022) University at Albany; completed coursework and Comprehensive Exams

Highlights:

Having Dr. Phyllis Freeman and Dr. Carol Vazquez to be female role models just out of their doctoral programs, Psych of Perception with Dr. Freeman; serving as a research assistant for Dr. Kurt Haas and helped him create a companion professor's guide for his Abnormal Psychology text.

GG: When did you first start working at New Paltz—and what was your position? And what goals have you set for your career along the way to guide your work over the years?

January 1980 started in Career Counseling. Taught job search skills, resume and cover letter writing.

RC-L: Placed students in internships, Cooperative Education placements and full-time jobs, did job development for the disabled, and also co-created a large AmeriCorps program. Practiced Maya Angelou's quote: "Success is liking yourself, liking what you do, and liking how you do it." Walked the walk by enjoying what I was doing, evaluated new forks-in-the road as opportunities arose, and chose the next career path one step at a time.

GG: What are three highlights from your work over the years—three things you are really proud of that you helped to accomplish?

- Created research-based substance abuse prevention programs
- Developed engaging Orientation programs for entering students and parents, and
- Model a humanistic approach to staff team building and conflict resolution.

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Interview with Robin Cohen La Valle, cont'd:**GG: What are three pieces of advice that you have for current New Paltz Psychology students?**

RC-L:

- Go to all of your classes—you are paying for them and will absorb the information through osmosis even on days you're not feeling up to it
- Don't be shy—spend time speaking to your faculty members—they are a great resource for career and personal advice
- Do something outside the classroom experience—volunteer in a few settings, shadow people in their jobs, network and learn from people who are in the field

GG: What is up next for one of our department's most cherished alum?

RC-L: I have my own consulting firm, Make Your Mark Consulting. I provide training, staff development and program assessment services to colleges and non-profit agencies. I have been working on the content of a few books and potential articles in my head and will have the time to pursue writing, traveling and time with friends and family.

Honoring the significance of her many accomplishments, SUNY New Paltz recognized the career of Robin Cohen-La Valle with the [President's Medal](#) at a retirement reception in her honor on Friday, June 16. The President's Medal is the highest award the campus can bestow on an individual. It recognizes significant and longstanding contributions to the University and the caliber of our academic, enrollment and student life achievements.

Congratulations on this well-deserved honor and best wishes for an equally well-deserved retirement from all of us in the Psychology Department, Robin!



**9/11 Memorial & Museum panel participants
Jenice Lyla Walford, Florence Buchanan, Karla
Vermeulen, and moderator Noah Rauch**

Associate Professor Karla Vermeulen was honored to participate in events related to her 2021 book, [*Generation Disaster: Coming of Age Post-9/11*](#), at two major museums this academic year.

In December 2022 she was part of a panel at the 9/11 Memorial & Museum (recording at <https://www.911memorial.org/events/generation-disaster>), and in March she participated in two events for educators at the [Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum](#) at the site of the 1995 bombing. Both events involved fascinating conversations about how disasters and other crises impact emerging adults, whether or not they're in college.

Faculty Publications

Keeping up an impressive track record from recent years, two New Paltz Psychology professors published books this year. Dr. Giordana Grossi co-edited a collection of essays with Aaron J. Newman, [*Changing Brains: Essays on Neuroplasticity In Honor of Helen J. Neville*](#), from Routledge Press.

The description from the book's back cover:

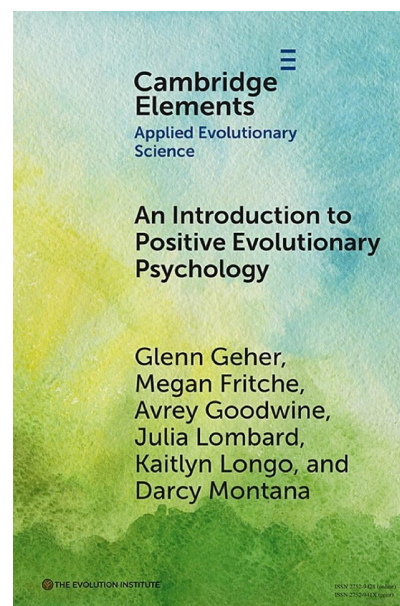
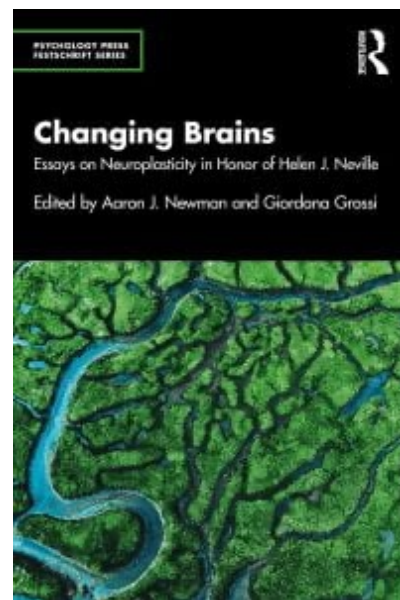
This book celebrates the pioneering work and contributions of Helen J. Neville, who conducted seminal neuroimaging work using electroencephalography and functional magnetic resonance imaging to illustrate the role that experience plays in shaping the brain.

Bringing together her former students, collaborators, and colleagues, the book presents essays and original empirical research that pay tribute to Helen Neville's groundbreaking work. The chapters discuss her contributions to our knowledge of neuroplasticity in perception, attention, and language, and how they inspired more recent developments in these and related areas, such as work on deafness (changes in sign language processing with age and the effects of cochlear implants on language development), the early stages of reading, memory consolidation during sleep, and the connection between attentional and memory systems. The book also discusses her strong commitment to rigorous science that could be translated into real-world practice through social interventions to improve neurodevelopmental outcomes.... The book showcases Helen Neville's legacy to the field of neuroscience and is a must-read for all students and researchers of neuroplasticity and developmental cognitive neuroscience.

And Professor Glenn Geher collaborated with five current and former New Paltz students to publish a book with Cambridge University Press, [*An Introduction to Positive Evolutionary Psychology*](#). The publisher's description:

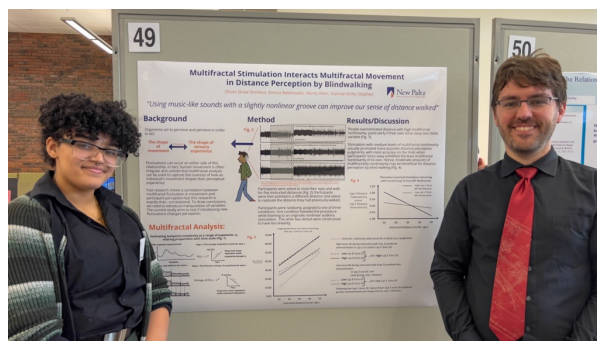
Over the past few decades, evolutionary psychology has shed light on such features of the human experience as mating, love, religion, aggression, warfare, physical health, mental health, and more. The field of positive psychology has progressed along a parallel trajectory, using behavioral science techniques to help our understanding of human thriving at the individual and community levels. Positive Evolutionary Psychology is dedicated to the integration of positive and evolutionary psychology, with an eye toward using Darwinian-inspired concepts to help advance our understanding of human thriving. This Element describes the basic ideas of this new approach to behavioral science as well as examples that dip into various aspects of the human experience, including such topics as health, education, friendships, love, and more—all with an eye toward providing a roadmap for the application of Darwinian principles to better understanding human thriving and the good life.

Congratulations, Dr. Grossi and Dr. Geher and your collaborators!



Faculty-Student Collaborations

Assistant Professor Damian Kelty-Stephen coauthored, with 4+1 MS student Oliver Drew Similton '23 and undergraduate Emma Rabinowitz '22, a manuscript that has been submitted to the journal *Ecological Psychology* entitled "Multifractal auditory stimulation promotes the effect of multifractal torso sway on spatial perception: Evidence from distance perception by blindwalking." The team also presented their work at the Student Research Symposium this spring.



Student Oliver Drew Similton and Assistant Professor Damian Kelty-Stephen

Dr. Kelty-Stephen also gave a talk on Zoom in June to an ["embodied cognition" biology lab led by Michael Levin](#), who had delivered a Harrington STEM lecture for the New Paltz community in February. Says Dr. Kelty-Stephen, "I was feeling especially lucky to be at New Paltz where we had such wonderful speakers who were then so accessible as to chat a bit. Anyway, after exchanging some thoughts on swarm intelligence, organisms-as-swarms, and swarms of organisms, Dr. Levin had me over to give a talk entitled "Multifractal social psychology: Swarms derive their intelligence from cascade-like dynamics." Watch the presentation here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P89WTmNBiBk&list=PL6SlweOjqYXyNT-a_Z0fR9ffyyet4MmS&index=8

Faculty-Student Collab: Dr. Matt Wice and Oliver Drew Similton (written by Oliver)

This summer, I am working on a SURE (Summer Undergraduate Research Experience) project with Dr. Matthew Wice investigating how people think about the morality of ghosting. The idea for this project emerged from a class discussion in a developmental psychology class that Dr. Wice was teaching. We were discussing the impact of ghosting on emerging adults and reached a sticking point: "is ghosting morally wrong?" From there, Dr. Wice and I developed the foundation for a study with the intent of investigating the following questions: 1) Do emerging adults think that ghosting is morally wrong? 2) What factors (e.g., length of the relationship) affect how ghosting is viewed from a moral standpoint?



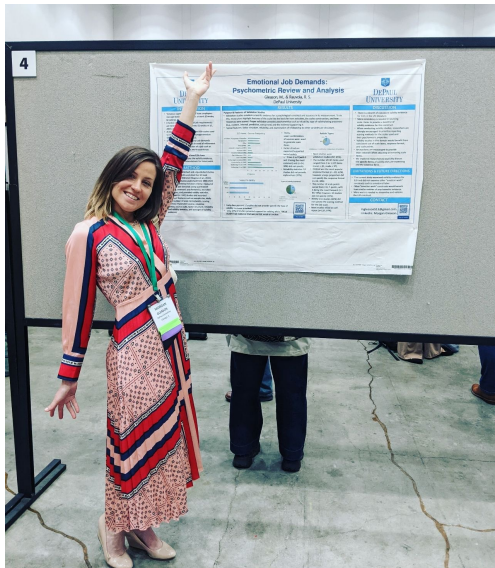
Assistant Professor Matt Wice

After delving into the literature, we found that past research on ghosting was focused primarily on defining the phenomenon-- where it occurs; when it occurs; how it looks when it happens; how it feels when it happens; and why it occurs.. What still felt hazy was society's view on ghosting-- what we think of it and what affects these views. Dr. Wice and I decided on an experimental study design using vignettes to tap participants' moral judgments of ghosting under varying circumstances. Based on our review of the literature, we chose length of relationship (a month vs. a year) and level of commitment (a combination of frequency of communication and time spent in person) as our independent variables. In response to the vignettes portraying acts of ghosting, we assessed whether or not participants thought that the act of ghosting was morally wrong.

Since starting the project, Dr. Wice and I have made a lot of headway. We've crafted vignettes with accompanying questions, developed a coding scheme, received HREB approval and started data collection. Additionally, we have been strengthening my grasp on the statistical techniques that we will utilize in our analyses, including factorial ANOVA and binary logistic regression. The current study has also provided me with a chance to use a mixed methods design, an approach that I have far less experience with than quantitative or qualitative alone. We hope to finish data collection in the coming weeks and finalize the manuscript as the semester begins.

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: Morgan Gleason Miller

New Paltz Degree: MA in Psychology 2014

Email: morgan.miller@stsconsulting.com

Current position: Consultant, Strategic Talent Solutions; ABD at DePaul University

The past few months have been busy: In April, I presented a poster at the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology conference in Boston. The poster outlined a systematic review on Emotional Job Demands I conducted with Dr. Shelly Rauvola here at DePaul University where I'm earning my PhD. My time at DePaul is almost done -- I am working to finish my dissertation by this upcoming Fall. The life of an I/O Psychologist is a dynamic one! In addition to working on my dissertation, I'm a consultant at two companies: Basil Consultants and Strategic Talent Solutions here in Chicago.

I'm most excited to share a project I was assigned to at STS: The annual Misericordia Emerging Leaders Board. For the ELB, I work alongside two colleagues (John Bausch and Nancy Cohen) coaching a team of seven leaders. These seven high-performing leaders were selected by management at four Chicago companies (e.g., food and beverage, banks, credit unions) to be placed on the board. We then assess these leaders both in the context of their companies and their interactions on the board itself, conducting 360s, assessing them individually and as part of the team, and coaching them over about 8 months. They develop their leadership competencies while working together to solve a business challenge for a Catholic charity organization. As the name suggests, that charity is Misericordia -- a charity that serves people with developmental disabilities. The project is twofold: These leaders grow in their careers from taking part in the board, and it benefits Misericordia's operations. I am honored to be a part of this project.

As a side project, I am working with two soldiers in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to analyze interview data they collected from a virtual community for women in the army! The virtual community called "Eshte Hail" (Wonder Women) provides a space for female soldiers to discuss issues that arise with others across cohorts and ranks in the army. The virtual community provides informal mentorship and social support for these soldiers. We are examining how community membership helps women navigate the unique challenges women encounter in the IDF among other themes. Some of these include balancing pregnancy and motherhood while managing physically demanding tasks within the organization (e.g., airplane mechanic). I'm looking forward to being a coauthor on the article we plan to publish. It has been an interesting experience working as the only American on a team of Israeli soldiers and researchers! I'm hoping to see legislation like the recently passed PWFA in Israel soon.

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Psychology Alumni Profiles

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I am grateful for the knowledge and support I gained at SUNY New Paltz! My time at SUNY began with learning valuable teaching skills through the TA position I held for Research Methods with Dr. Corwin Senko. I adapted a lot from the teaching style of Dr. Phyllis Freeman who was one of my first teaching mentors. Above all, the relationships and connections I made at SUNY helped me immensely on my journey. In particular, Drs. Glenn Geher, Maryalice Citera, Cliff Evans, Bobby Bui, and Tabitha Holmes supported and mentored me unwaveringly as a student, an adjunct, and finally as a lecturer (for a time). The opportunities I was given there and the guidance and mentorship I received from faculty is the reason I was accepted to DePaul University! I was rejected from graduate school in my first round of applications and Dr. Bobby Bui kept the faith. I will always remember his words "You belong here." None of it would have been possible without SUNY New Paltz. Thank you from the bottom of my heart! Wish me luck on my dissertation...

Forever a hawk,
Morgan

<https://www.stsconsulting.com/founding-principles/>

<https://www.basilconsultants.com/>

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/morgan-gleason/>



Name: Dr. Olivia Jewell

New Paltz degree: M.A. in Psychology, May 2018

Email: Olivia.jewell194@gmail.com

Greetings from abroad! I have just finished defending my PhD in psychology at Goldsmiths University London. While there are some minor revisions to take care of, I have officially passed.

Although my schooling adventures have taken me far from New Paltz, I will always cherish the time I spent there. Additionally, it is impossible to overstate how much I learned at SUNY New Paltz, much of which has been essential to my growth as a student, researcher, and educator. Through working in the evolutionary psychology lab as well as on my own thesis, I developed a strong sense of independence and self-determination that helped me through the rigor of a doctoral degree.

Perhaps one of the most valuable experiences I had at SUNY New Paltz was working as a teaching assistant for Research Methods while doing my Master's degree. I gained valuable teaching experience which included learning how to build lectures, create teaching materials, foster critical thinking, grade assignments, and tutor students individually. Working as a teaching assistant sparked a passion for teaching in me that I have carried ever since. I have been lucky enough to take up teaching opportunities in the United Kingdom as a result.

It is hard to imagine how different my experience working on a PhD would have been had I not attended SUNY New Paltz and gathered such wonderful experiences and connections. I had the opportunity to attend conferences, be part of published papers, work on collaborative research projects, and helped build the Ancestor's Trail USA. Additionally, I shared many of these experiences with some of the most wonderful people I've ever known, who will always have a place in my heart. I genuinely cannot speak highly enough of my time at SUNY New Paltz.

Name: Jennifer Link

New Paltz degree: MS in Psychological Science, Fall 2021

Email : jlink@ucdavis.edu

Current position: 3rd Year PhD student in Animal Behavior Graduate Group at UC Davis



Currently, I am a PhD Student studying Animal Behavior (specifically, domestic cat behavior) at UC Davis. When I first began in my current program I will admit to feeling a little apprehensive, believing that perhaps the other members of my cohort would be more prepared, with their degrees being in more “hard science” fields like neuroscience, biology, and animal science. I am grateful to say that I was wrong to believe that New Paltz may have under-prepared me. If it weren’t for the amazing faculty and education I received while pursuing my MS degree in Psychological science at SUNY New Paltz, there’s no way I would have gotten into, or felt as confident in, my current program, the best of its kind in the nation.

My dissertation will primarily be centered around the socialization of young kittens and adult cats, and I will never stop being grateful that I get to handle tiny kittens and call it my job. I am going to animal shelters everyday to handle and bond with lonely, fearful cats, I get to figure out ways to make those cats more adoptable, and work with shelter staff to ensure that what I’m doing is accessible to them and others like them across the country. It’s such an honor to get to do this incredible and important work in companion animal welfare alongside huge names in my field, and I hope that the research I do will someday make a difference to those fearful cats and kittens in shelters and the home.

I am particularly grateful to the amazing faculty I had the chance to work with while studying and TAing at SUNY New Paltz, including my advisor Dr. Tabitha Holmes, as well as Drs Glenn Geher and Matthew Wice. I’m not sure how many psychology professors would so enthusiastically agree to help me down a path to Animal behavior and Anthrozoology, but these wonderful people encouraged me to reach for the program I wanted, and I wouldn’t have been able to get here without them.



Name: Stephanie Tillotson

New Paltz degree: BA Psychology, 2006

Email: stilllifeinmotion@yahoo.com

Current position: ASW clinical therapist in California

I currently work for a children’s hospital as a clinical therapist in San Diego, California. I work with ages 5-20 where we help children with various diagnoses such as anxiety, depression, autism, ADHD, PTSD, schizophrenia, eating disorders, oppositional defiant disorder, and any other challenge the child is facing. I specialize in trauma and abuse with children to assist them with overcoming their past and to flourish in their future. I am currently working on my certification for EMDR and PCIT, which I hope will help me help my clients and their families even more. I am working towards becoming an LCSW and just finished my hours.

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I attended SUNY New Paltz for my bachelors in Psychology. This truly helped pave the way for my career. Initially, I wanted to be a criminal psychologist. However, after taking an adolescent course at New Paltz, it changed my path. In that class, we had a guest speaker come in where a 23-year-old girl told us her story. She told us how she came into a youth program after having a baby from being raped by her family member when she was only a child. She continued to have children and now, maxed out at the program, due to this case manager, she is now a single mother raising her four children on her own. She looked at that case manager like her shooting star. It was then that I knew the power one could have in this field to help others and to help a child overcome what they've been through to come out on top. It was then that I decided to become a child therapist and help children heal from their trauma to allow them to go on to a prosperous life and not become the criminal they could have been otherwise. I felt it was more important to be preventative rather than reactive, which I still do. It took me some time to go back for my masters, but I did it. And now, I can see for myself the difference I am making in these children's lives and their families.

Name: Jennifer (Coburn) Barrett

New Paltz degree: BA with majors in psychology and sociology, 2003

Email: jennifernbarrett@gmail.com

Current position: Middle School Guidance Counselor, Manchester Township Middle School (NJ)



I recently completed my 18th year as a middle school guidance counselor where I also serve as one of the school's anti-bullying specialists. I provide periodic, school based, solution focused counseling services for all students in 8th grade. Some topics I assist students with are: personal family issues that affect their ability to focus in class, organization, study skills, and peer conflict resolution.

In my role as an anti-bullying specialist, I work to educate and support students and their families when they are involved with or witness to incidents of bullying, harassment and/or intimidation. The goal is to foster a community of tolerance, acceptance, and celebration of people's differences.

During the Summer of 2020, I completed a 200 hour yoga instructor certification course via Zoom. Upon returning to school in Fall of 2020, I found my mindfulness training to be extremely useful in helping students navigate the many obstacles they faced, and in a lot of cases still face, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. I find myself teaching coping skills such as deep breathing, visualization, and positive affirmations often to my students.

In addition to counseling students about their academic and personal/social needs, I also serve as one of the building's standardized testing coordinators where I often find myself applying my data organization skills learned during my time at SUNY New Paltz. Data collection is only one small example of how my time at SUNY New Paltz has proved invaluable in my post college life. I consider myself a lifelong learner who is always looking to learn and grow personally and professionally. I highly recommend Dr. Glenn Geher and Nicole Wedberg's book ***Positive Evolutionary Psychology*** to anyone looking for current research about living one's best life and helping others reach their potential.



Name: Kaelyn Marks

New Paltz degree: MS Psychological Science, December 2021

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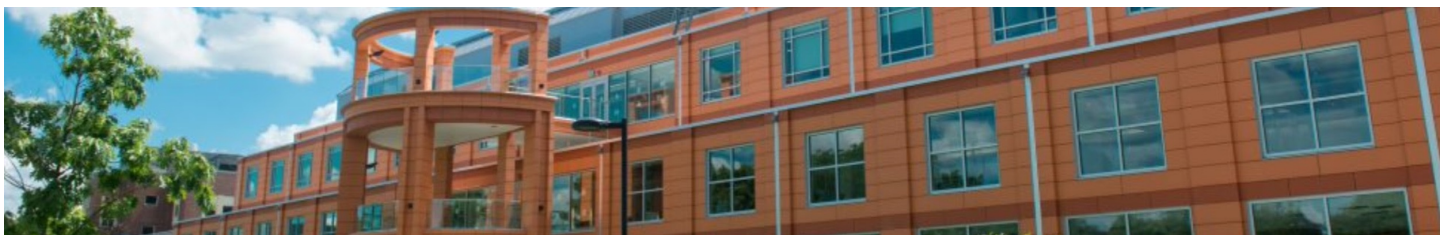
Current position: Clinical Psychology Trainee, Hofstra University

During my time at SUNY New Paltz I discovered my interest in working with individuals with developmental disabilities. I obtained a position as a community habilitations specialist at Abilities First Inc. As classes went remote in the middle of my program due to COVID-19, I moved back home to Long Island. I soon reached the tail end of my degree and was completing my thesis. While doing so, I had come across an opportunity to train to become an ABA instructor.

I began making more connections between applied and clinical psychology. All the while I had been applying to PhD programs in various areas of psychology. Ultimately, I chose to put all my eggs into the clinical psychology basket in my second round of applying to schools. I was offered an acceptance to Hofstra University's Clinical Psychology PhD program.

I am now a year into my PhD program. I have grown so much over the year, especially thanks to the foundation SUNY New Paltz' MS in Psychological Science provided me. My research skills from the program helped me get a position as a research assistant. I am now working on a study funded by the NSF with faculty at Hofstra University and East Carolina University. My past experience as a course assistant at SUNY New Paltz also helped give me the confidence to apply for a position as an instructor at Hofstra. I recently finished teaching a Psychopathology course to undergraduates in Spring 2023 and will be teaching Research Methods in the upcoming Fall semester. I continue to provide ABA services as well and am training in the DBT and ACT clinics at Hofstra's Saltzman Community Services Center. I owe a lot of the knowledge of research to my time at SUNY New Paltz as well as so many other skills which have transferred into my clinical work. I am able to collaborate with other individuals thanks to the wonderful research teams I was on and now I am helping many upper year students in my program on their dissertations.

There are so many more ways SUNY New Paltz will forever hold such a special place in my heart. I am so grateful to have been in the program. I truly cherish my time there. New Paltz is also just such a beautiful place to live. I look forward to the chance to be in the area again. Fingers crossed, maybe I will land an internship close by in a few years!



Student Awards



Congratulations to our 2023 Psychology Students of Excellence!

It was delightful to return to an in-person awards celebration ceremony for our amazing graduating student! We wish all of the class of 2023 the best - please keep in touch and let us know where your SUNY New Paltz Psychology degree takes you!



ALUMNI
— 2023 —
REUNION
OCTOBER 20 - 22

Come back to New Paltz for Alumni Weekend, 2023 – October 20-22!
The foliage will be at total peak. Come join the alumni hike in the Gunks
led by Psychology Professor Glenn Geher.

Full information on the weekend schedule can be found here:

<https://www.newpaltz.edu/reunion-2023>

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/>