

THE SELF MONITOR

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

Volume 17 - Summer 2024

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Message from the Outgoing Department Chair, Dr. Jonathan Raskin



It has been another busy year in the Department of Psychology at SUNY New Paltz! As usual, our faculty and students have been extremely productive. I am very proud of all they have accomplished. Here are a few highlights:

- Psychology major Julia Lombard ('24) was the valedictorian at graduation this past spring. Julia is starting the social psychology doctoral program at Florida State University in the fall. Congratulations, Julia! See page 17 for a profile of this inspiring student.
- Assistant Professor Matt Wice mentored MS student Oliver Similton ('24g) on a research project on the experience of being ghosted online – links and more on page 6.
- Assistant professor Damian Kelty-Stephen co-edited a new book, and he was appointed associate editor of the *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* – more on page 5.
- Two faculty published second editions of textbooks: Associate Professor Maryalice Citera (*Training & Talent Development*) and me (*Psychopathology & Mental Distress: Contrasting Perspectives*). More on page 4.
- Associate Professor Tabitha Holmes edited a special issue of the *Journal of Constructivist Psychology* on constructing identity through narrative – details on page 5.
- Professor Doug Maynard received the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Way to go, Doug! Profile on page 3.

(Continued on next page)

Message from the Incoming Department Chair, Dr. Giordana Grossi



**Dr. Grossi, somewhere on
the Camino Portuguese
(from Porto, Portugal, to
Santiago de Compostela,
Spain), June 2024**

It is with a mix of excitement and trepidation that I start a new journey as chair of the Psychology Department. For those who don't know me, I have been at SUNY New Paltz since 2001. I am a cognitive neuroscientist who studies language. My empirical work explores aspects of automaticity and expertise in visual word recognition in both monolinguals and bilinguals, and employs both behavioral and electrophysiological measures. I also investigate issues pertinent to sex/gender in neuroscience, mostly in collaboration with colleagues from the [Neurogenderings Network](#), of which I am a board member.

The department has made steady progress on a series of objectives in the past few years and is now in a very good place. I want to thank Dr. Jon Raskin, the outgoing chair, for his leadership at the helm of the department during the past seven years. Our majors and minors were recently revised, and the curriculum has been expanded with new offerings. The graduate program now includes the 4+1 option, which enables students to complete both a Bachelors and Masters degree within five years. Psychology faculty are as busy and productive as ever, in terms of research and new course offerings, as are many of our students. Don't forget to check out the [Department News website](#) for updates on their accomplishments. My goal is to continue this positive trajectory by fostering a collegial and intellectually vibrant working environment.

(Continued on page 3)

Dr. Raskin's Letter, Continued

- The Department's cognitive science colloquium had Dr. Chris Kello from the University of California-Merced present on "The Stunning Rise of Large Language Models." This afforded students and faculty a wonderful opportunity to discuss the latest research on AI.
- Associate Professor Karla Vermeulen was appointed as a Smithsonian Research Associate with the Smithsonian's National Museum of History. She and the Director of the SUNY New Paltz Institute for Disaster Mental Health, Amy Nitza, advised the Smithsonian on best ways to present traumatic content related to 9/11 exhibits.

This is just a sampling of the Department's many accomplishments. Our full exploits are described in detail throughout this issue of the newsletter. We hope you enjoy reading about them.

I have a few additional news items to share.

- I wish to extend warm and well-deserved congratulations to Kanjira Rodriguez, our department administrative assistant, on her recent appointment to a position in the admissions office as a freshman admissions counselor/advisor. Kanji has served admirably as the face of the Department of Psychology since late 2022, and she will be sorely missed. The admissions office is lucky to have her. I know she will do a terrific job there. If you see her around campus, please congratulate her on her new position.
- We are pleased that Dr. Stew Friedman, an alum of our graduate program, is giving back this fall by volunteering his time to co-teach a psychology course on "Total Leadership" with his colleague, Michelle Rajotte. The class will cover Stew's uniquely personal take on leadership (drawn from his many years as an I/O psychologist at the Wharton School of Business). Juniors and seniors taking the course will benefit immensely.
- Dr. Maria Félix-Ortiz, a lecturer in the Department, is leaving the university to pursue other career directions. Dr. Félix-Ortiz taught many different classes and helped us revise the crisis intervention course. It has been nice working with her. We wish her luck in future endeavors.

Finally, this is my last newsletter column as department chair because I am starting a two-year interim term as associate provost for academic advising. Although this appointment provides me with an exciting opportunity to contribute to SUNY New Paltz in a new way, I will miss students and faculty in the Department of Psychology. Having served as chair for the past seven years has been an honor and a privilege. I have learned so much from all of you, and I am confident that the Department is positioned for continued success. Please welcome the incoming chair, Professor Giordana Grossi. I am excited to see Dr. Grossi take on this new role. She will be a wonderful advocate for the Department of Psychology, and I am excited to see what the Department accomplishes under her leadership.

As I sign off for the last time as chair, I wish to underscore that donations to the Department of Psychology Fund are deeply appreciated (<http://www.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>). Your generosity helps to provide students with the same kinds of positive experiences that you recall from your time here. Of course, donating is not the only way to give back. If you have ideas about other ways to support the Department, please don't hesitate to contact us. To get in touch, contact Giordana Grossi (grossig@newpaltz.edu). We'd love to hear from you!

So long for now.

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

Dr. Grossi's Letter, Continued from Page 1

I look forward to what comes next, working with everybody. Please stop by the main office in the Fall to say Hi. New faces will greet you, starting with a new administrative assistant; Kanji Rodriguez, the current assistant, will leave us for the Admission Office starting August 1. She will be sorely missed.

Enjoy the rest of the summer!

Giordana Grossi, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair of Psychology

**Interview with Dr. Douglas Maynard,
Professor of Psychology since 1998
and recent recipient of the SUNY
Chancellor's Award for Excellence
in Teaching**

*Interview conducted by Dr. Glenn Geher,
Self Monitor Co-Editor*



GG: Dr. Maynard, for years, I've known you to be someone who is highly dedicated to his students and to the craft of teaching. I was warmed to see you recognized for all your work related to teaching over the years with the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. What are some of the core elements of your teaching philosophy that underlie your work in this regard?

DM: Thanks for these kind words! This may sound very boring, but probably one of the central tenets of my teaching philosophy is that nothing works without clarity. By clarity, I mean conveying material (especially if it is challenging or abstract) clearly, but also having transparent guidelines for assignments and projects as well as course policies. Borrowing from self-determination theory (SDT), I also feel like learning is most likely to take place - and stick - if the classroom environment supports the three basic human needs of autonomy (giving students room for self-direction), competence (challenging students and helping them see their own progress) and relatedness (finding ways for students to connect and learn from each other).

GG: You've taught in the Psychology Department at New Paltz for a quarter century and you've had many specific successes in the domain of teaching. Can you please describe a few specific teaching-related successes that you've experienced over the years?

DM: Some of the highlights of my teaching career come outside the classroom, often in the research lab where my students are getting more one-on-one time developing practical research, statistical and communication skills. Sometimes this can happen in a class, such as when students in a small, advanced statistics course analyzed data from a SUNY New Paltz senior survey and had the opportunity to present their results and insights to the upper-level administration of the university. Other times, a class has gelled interpersonally in a really special way, leading to not only

(Continued on page 4)

Interview with Doug Maynard, continued:

meaningful learning experiences but also sometimes to touching instances of moral support as well. Oh, and there's that time many years ago that Introduction to Psychology students photoshopped my head onto a picture of NSYNC and gave it to me at the end of the semester with all their signatures - I figure I must have done something right for them to decide to do that!

GG: Related to this recognition, you were recently asked to carry the mace at Commencement. Tell us about that experience!

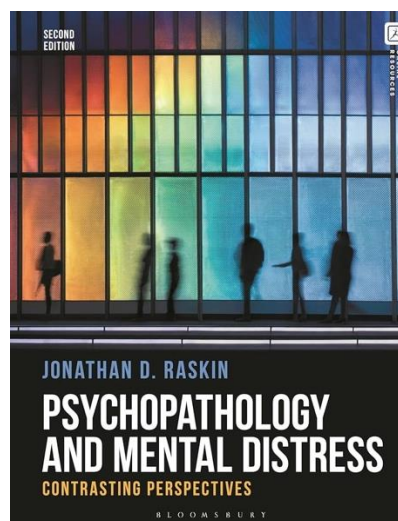
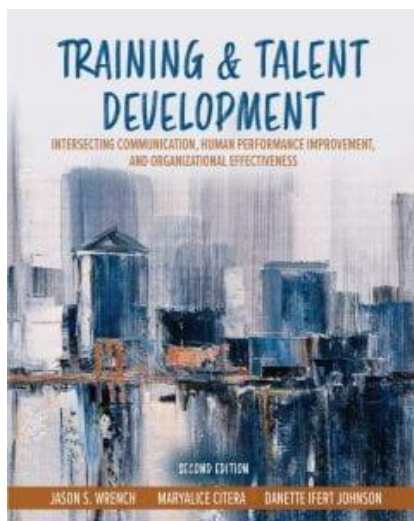
DM: As someone who has played his share of Dungeons and Dragons, I've often watched other Grand Marshals carry the ceremonial mace with curiosity (and perhaps a touch of envy). So it was a treat to be able to wield it myself. It's pretty heavy! More broadly, I enjoyed being able to kick off the graduate commencement ceremony to celebrate the accomplishments of SUNY New Paltz students getting their master's degrees, especially the students in our Psychological Sciences program.

GG: What are 2-3 pieces of advice you have to new teachers in higher education?

DM: Keep having conversations with other teachers about teaching. We can learn so much from each other by sharing tips, challenges, successes, and frustrations. That being said, we each have our own teaching style that is worth honoring - there's no single way to be an effective and inspiring instructor. Also, when a class just isn't feeling right for some reason, I've learned it's helpful to openly acknowledge this, and then get (anonymous) feedback from the students. This can suggest changes, sometimes relatively minor ones, that make a huge difference in the students' experience - plus, you've just given them a genuine voice which they always appreciate.

Faculty Publications

Two faculty members published second editions of their textbooks this year – an indicator of their work's value in the field of psychology! Congratulations to Associate Professor Maryalice Citera, who co-authored *Training & Talent Development: Intersecting Communication, Human Performance Improvement, and Organizational Effectiveness* with Jason Wrench and Danette Ifert Johnson, from Kendall Hunt Publishing, and to Professor Jon Raskin, for *Psychopathology and Mental Distress: Contrasting Perspectives*, from Bloomsbury.



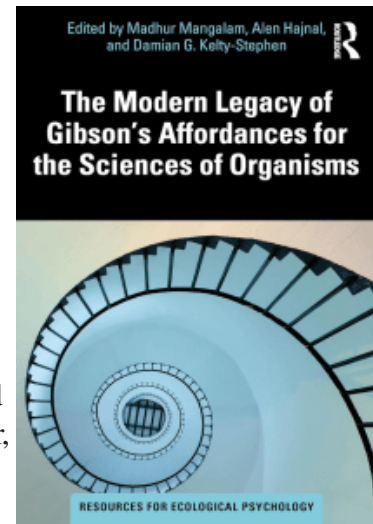
Assistant Professor Damian Kelty-Stephen Publishes Book on Gibson's Affordances

This spring Dr. Kelty-Stephen published the first edition of a new book, [*The Modern Legacy of Gibson's Affordances for the Sciences of Organisms*](#), which he co-edited with Madhur Mangalam and Alen Hajnal for Routledge.

This edited collection provides a comprehensive and empirically informed discussion on affordances and their role in studying goal-directed behavior, covering philosophical, experimental psychological, neuroscientific, and applied perspectives. Showcasing the work of expert contributors from different backgrounds, the book inspires new directions for future research in affordances. Chapters address questions relating to the definition and perception of affordances, their advantages over stimuli, the relationship between affordances and behavior, and how systems engage with affordances in different tasks and intentions. This question-based format provides a distinctive perspective that allows for a thorough exploration of the expansive field of affordance research.

This book serves as a crucial resource for seasoned scientists, researchers, and undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of ecological psychology, sensation and perception, cognition, and the philosophy of cognitive science, as well as non-academic individuals interested in mind sciences broadly construed. It provides valuable insights and knowledge in these fields, making it an essential reference for those seeking to deepen their understanding in the areas of perception and cognition.

In addition to publishing the book, Dr. Kelty-Stephen was also recently appointed as an associate editor at the American Psychological Association's [*Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception & Performance*](#). His first ever published article appeared in *JEP:HPP* 15 years ago, and he has regularly published there since then. His new role as an associate editor provides him with an opportunity to give back to the experimental psychology community and help the journal keep diversifying and broadening the scope of peer-reviewed discourse on perception and action.



Associate Professor Tabitha Holmes Edits Special Journal Section

Dr. Holmes guest-edited and wrote the introduction to a special section of [*The Journal of Constructivist Psychology*](#) which explores narrative identity through a constructivist lens. Drawing from multiple theoretical and methodological approaches, this scholarship offers new ways to consider how individuals construct their identities through storied exchanges and interpretations in and outside the research setting.

Strategies for both researchers and clinicians are offered through articles on a wide range of topics including intersectionality and researcher identity, ethical obligations in narrative research, and processes for capturing the experiences of breast cancer survivors and the adult children of narcissists – indicators of how broadly narrative approaches can help us understand the human experience!

Associate Professor Elizabeth Hirshorn and Three Students Publish Article in High-Profile Journal

Dr. Hirshorn and students Emma Reilly, Alison Robert-Louche, and Cody Wojszynski published an article in *The Journal of Research in Reading* on “[Individual Differences in Holistic Processing and The Role of Phonological Processing in Sentence Comprehension.](#)”

From their abstract: Recent research has documented individual differences in the reading profiles of skilled native English readers using a behavioral marker of holistic visual word processing (orientation sensitivity). A more holistic word reading profile is associated with a weaker correlation with phonological decoding for word identification. Interestingly, that is different from typical patterns in skilled reading in English. The current study aimed to further assess the underlying distribution of orientation sensitivity as a continuous measure in an unrestricted undergraduate population and to extend past findings to understand the role of phonological decoding in reading comprehension as a function of orientation sensitivity.

A group of 137 SUNY New Paltz undergraduates completed an orientation sensitivity test to assess the overarching distribution. A subset of 55 SUNY New Paltz undergraduates completed additional reading-related tests (phonological decoding and reading comprehension) on an online platform ([findingfive.com](#)). The relationship between orientation sensitivity and reliance on phonological decoding on reading comprehension was assessed using regression.... Those with relatively greater orientation sensitivity had a weaker relationship between measures of phonological decoding and a reading comprehension measure, as predicted. The results extended the finding of differences in reliance on phonological decoding to reading comprehension as a function of orientation sensitivity. These results help refine our understanding of orientation sensitive readers and potential alternative route to successful reading found in the general population.

Assistant Professor Matt Wice and Student Oliver Similton Shed Light on Attitudes Around “Ghosting”

A research collaboration between Assistant Professor Matt Wice and 4+1 student Oliver Similton, which was described in the [2023 Self Monitor](#), led to results that were featured in the [SUNY New Paltz Alumni Magazine](#) (excerpted here) and in a [very clever video](#) featuring the researchers and many New Paltz students.

“Ghosting is randomly disappearing on someone when you’re talking mostly online,” said Similton. Their study, “Emerging Adult Perspectives on the Morality of Ghosting,” focused on better understanding this phenomenon, and how younger generations experience and perceive it.



**Oliver Similton ('23, '24G) and
Assistant Professor Matt Wice**

The team used a between-subjects design study model – a sort of “A/B test” approach – to compare participants’ reactions to one of four randomly assigned, hypothetical ghosting scenarios and asked how they would react. Each vignette showcases a relationship at different stages, based on level of commitment and length of time spent together. Ultimately, Similton and Wice found that while ghosting is widely seen as poor etiquette, members of the Gen Z and Millennial generations are less likely to have strong objections to ghosting than expected.

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 grossig@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: Timea Tozser

New Paltz Degree: MA in Psychology, 2017

Email: tozser.2@wright.edu

Current Position: 4th Year Clinical Psychology Doctoral Student, Wright State University

My name is Timea Tozser, and I am an alumna of the Masters in Psychology program at SUNY New Paltz. Following graduation in 2017, I worked full-time as a psychometrist at the University of Rochester Medical Center for three years. I began my doctoral degree (PsyD) in Clinical Psychology in 2020 at Wright State University School of Professional Psychology. During my time, I have co-authored numerous articles and book chapters, taken on multiple leadership positions, most notably the program's student body president, and co-created the school's first nationally recognized clinical neuropsychology student interest group.



During my time at WSU SOPP, I have been fortunate to be presented with numerous awards such as the Lorna G. Dawes Achievement Award, Student Union & CREC, Student Involvement and Leadership Achievement Award, Wright State University Graduate Student Leader Award, Wright State University Barnes and Noble Scholarship, Wright State University Campus Recreation Leadership Award, APA Division 22 Pediatric Rehabilitation Poster Award Recipient, APA Division 22 Sunil Sengupta VA Student Research Travel Award Recipient, and APA Division 16 Conference Poster Blue Ribbon Award Recipient. I have been involved in independent research for clinical programmatic improvement projects and have presented research posters and presentations at several conferences. I recently successfully defended my dissertation in May 2024.

Excitingly, I'm about to embark on a new chapter in my training. I have been matched at an internship at Baylor College of Medicine/TIRR Memorial Hermann Hospital, among the top five rehabilitation hospitals in the country, according to U.S. News & World Report's Best Hospital rankings for 2023-2024. I will be this year's clinical intern for the Neuropsychology & Rehabilitation Psychology Track, a crucial step towards completing my doctoral degree in Spring 2025. My experiences at New Paltz set the groundwork for my success in achieving my long-term goal of becoming a board-certified clinical neuropsychologist. Reflecting on my journey, I'm grateful for the invaluable support and training I received at SUNY New Paltz. The challenges I faced as a student in higher-level education have become the tools I use in my research and clinical settings. I owe a special thanks to Dr. Tabitha Holmes and the rest of the faculty who shaped me into the writer and presenter I am today. Thank you, New Paltz, and go Hawks!

Name: Sharrell Matta

New Paltz Degree: MA in Psychology, 2004

Email: Mattafiedme@gmail.com

Current Position: School Counselor

I've been a successful New York City, Department of Education School Counselor for the last 16 years. Currently a mom of four beautiful children, with my husband Daniel Matta. Our college decision led to our Matta Family of six. We are forever grateful for our foundation at SUNY New Paltz, where our academic and social experiences led to our lifestyle as both educators dedicated to expanding the growth mindset of our community and youth.

As a result, this coloring book was created with our daughters' dreams and aspirations in mind, to celebrate their melanin skin and all the different shades of our young black and brown daughters, sisters, scholars, educators, and best friends. For all the young girls of the world and who they aspire to be. Giving them a growth mindset to continue to see themselves in many different attributes of the best version of who they would like to become. Further, it is dedicated to celebrating and representing the visual aesthetic and cultural legacy of females, such as our daughters, and of their African American artistry. Leading to visual imagery as an opportunity to be bold within the colors of their melanin, as a reflection to slay in different shades. We hope to encourage those of all ages to use self-care through the arts to promote a positive depiction of oneself while uplifting one's self-esteem with creativity.



The Matta Family's coloring book is [available on Amazon!](#)



Name: Aimee Niegocki

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, Minor in Disaster Studies, 2008

Graduate Degree: MA/CAS in School Psychology from SUNY Plattsburgh

Email: aimee.niegocki@gmail.com

Current Position: School Psychologist at Hauppauge Public Schools (Suffolk County, Long Island)

I am currently a School Psychologist at Hauppauge High School. I just received tenure and feel very fortunate that I get to work for such an amazing school district! Some of my main responsibilities include chairing CSE meetings, conducting cognitive assessments, developing and monitoring behavior intervention plans, creating individualized education plans, and providing counseling support. I work collaboratively with building administrators, guidance counselors, social workers, and teachers in order to ensure student success!

My undergraduate experience at New Paltz was amazing. I loved my professors in the psychology department and each one provided me with the skills and knowledge I needed to pursue graduate school. As an undergraduate, I was able to participate in independent studies, conduct research, and even present the research at a conference in Chicago with Dr. Holmes. Additionally, minoring in Disaster Studies helped prepare me for my current role as a School Psychologist, as I am a member of the crisis response team in my building. Thank you Dr. Geher for being the best advisor and for all your support when I was a student in New Paltz!



Name: Victoria Zezula

New Paltz Degree: MA in Biology, minors in French and Psychology

Email: v.zezula1@gmail.com

Current position: Operational Key Account Manager at Sterling Aviation a Kuehne + Nagel Company

Transitioning into the role of Operational Key Account Manager at Sterling Aviation represents a significant step for me. In this position, I am responsible for maintaining exceptional service standards for one of our top clients, requiring me to be available round-the-clock to address their needs and ensure the consistency and quality of our services and data. My journey to this role was shaped by my diverse academic background at New Paltz, where I initially explored fields such as biology, chemistry, mathematics, and psychology with aspirations towards the medical field. However, it was my experiences in psychology courses, particularly those focusing on social and evolutionary psychology, that have proven unexpectedly relevant in my current professional landscape. These courses equipped me with the valuable insights into human behavior and effective communication skills, which I now apply daily in my interactions with clients and colleagues.

People often highlight the prevalence of mathematics, yet it's crucial to recognize the extensive influence of psychology. As individuals within the human species, our interactions with others are paramount. We offer solutions to each other driven by innate altruism and the imperative to enhance our professional standing, all contributing to our collective success. While my career path didn't lead me directly into medicine or sustainability, my passion for sustainability remains strong. I've realized that the principles I've learned in psychology, coupled with my understanding of supply chain logistics, can be instrumental in addressing environmental challenges within the aviation industry. With this in mind, I'm considering studying Sustainability Management, where I aim to leverage my expertise to contribute meaningful solutions to reduce the environmental footprint of one of the world's largest greenhouse gas-emitting sectors. The blend of business knowledge, psychological insights, and environmental awareness reflects not only my professional aspirations but also my commitment to making a positive impact in the world.

Name: Tatiana Barnett

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, 2024

Email: tatianarbarnett@gmail.com

As of right now, I'm waiting to hear back from numerous entry level jobs relating to the field of psychology such as Mental Health Technician, Research Assistant positions, as well as any entry level position in the healthcare field. I've decided to take a gap year from school while I gain work experience as well as decide to pursue a Masters degree or jump right into my Ph.D. These programs are very competitive and it's not easy finding work right now either. Nevertheless, my experience at New Paltz as a student-athlete on women's tennis has encouraged me to stay positive and continue to work hard and, most importantly, trust myself and the decisions that I make. In the future, I hope to eventually obtain my doctoral degree and work with adolescents as well as advocate for accessible healthcare.





Name: Matthew Seipp

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, 2023

Email: mjestheater@gmail.com

Current position: Pursuing Masters in Sport and Performance Psychology

I have found a new type of degree in the psychology field that I just happened upon when talking with some friends within the Esports community. Sport and Performance psychology was never something I had heard of until a few years ago and is a fairly small field. Finding a degree program was tricky as there are very few schools that offer it and none that are close in location to New Paltz, either I would have to move to go to school somewhere else, or an even bigger challenge it seemed was finding a program online. This degree combines some of my favorite things, sports – specifically Esports, and psychology. You just need a master’s degree and then to start working for yourself, you can get a certification through the Association of Applied Sport Psychology.

I am currently working on a master’s degree in Sport and Performance psychology, through National University. This course for theoretical focus (typically taken to improve coaching skills and work with higher level teams) takes 13 months, or for a practical focus (taken to work directly with athletes as a sport consultant or sport psychologist) takes about 18 months to complete. These 4-week course classes are back-to-back through winter and summer letting you expedite your degree goals while still being able to work at your own pace. Sport and Performance Psychology was something I had learned about while studying at New Paltz but was not talked about very much.

Sport and Performance Psychology is a field within psychology that focuses on the mental aspects of sport or performance. While the largest organization that acquires S&P psychologists is the US military, across the globe you can work with many different clients. Obviously military contracts are available, but you can also work with athletes on all levels from youth sports to the big leagues, stage performers, musicians, businesses to improve how they communicate and strengthen team building. I use my New Paltz degree as the backbone of what I am currently learning and what I will be applying in my work with clients. Taking many different psychology courses and having the strong grasp on how to research and write professional papers that New Paltz gave me has been a major asset to my current success in my program. For any additional information for those who may be struggling to find places to study, or any other general questions on the degree and field, feel free to contact my email!

Name: Elizabeth Gerritt

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, Minors in Sociology and Asian Studies, 2007

Email: egerritt@gmail.com

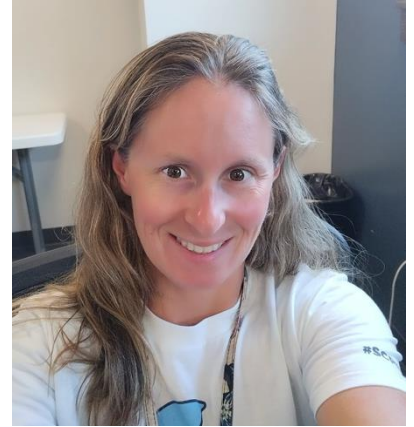
Current position: School Psychologist

After graduating from New Paltz in 2007, I attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania, receiving my Masters and Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study in School Psychology, and then moved to Delaware where I have been working as a school psychologist. Over the years, I have also received my Autism certification and my School Neuropsychology certification. I am currently a school psychologist in a specialized program that primarily works with students with Autism. My job allows me to incorporate many areas of psychology, such as behaviorism, counseling, crisis management, knowledge regarding research and evidence-based treatments, and the use of statistics when analyzing results of assessments.

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My time at New Paltz was invaluable and prepared me more than I can ever describe for my current role. When I started at New Paltz I had an idea that I wanted to go into psychology, but that was where it ended. I was able to get a well-rounded education at New Paltz, explore different areas and determine my preferences within the field, and with assistance from fabulous mentors I was able to determine a path that utilizes many branches of psychology to work with children. I also had the opportunity to study abroad in Huddersfield, England and take additional psychology classes, including a forensics class, in a psychology-specific study abroad program. Theories and concepts that I learned in my classes at New Paltz, such as operant conditioning and classical conditioning, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, placebo effect, and bystander effect, I utilize throughout every day on the job. In addition, I was able to immerse myself in the psychology community at New Paltz by joining the undergraduate psychology association and by being inducted into Psi Chi senior year.



On the side, I compete in endurance sports. While at New Paltz, I competed on the swim team for two years and swimming has always been a part of my life. When I moved to Delaware, I took up running and then biking. I have trained for many half marathons, a few marathons, and two 50ks. I also compete in triathlons up to the half ironman distance. I have found that endurance sports are a great self-care activity and those years of swimming while studying at New Paltz taught me how to do both successfully.



Name: Olivia Cea

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, Minor in Sociology, 2021

Email: OCea@astorservices.org

Current position: Providing therapeutic and clinical services to teens

I work with adolescent aged youth throughout Ulster County in a short-term therapeutic and educational program held at Ulster Boces for clients experiencing mental health trauma and/or crises—most of whom have been referred by their home school district or other program. The goal is to help the clients successfully transition back to their home school or into an alternative placement after receiving the short-term intensive treatment. My favorite part of this job is engaging the clients in our daily group therapy sessions and helping them build skills & share their emotions during individual counseling sessions. One of the greatest feelings is

watching a client find the strength and resilience within them to continue with their education and persist no matter what.

New Paltz was the place where I was introduced to working in mental health counseling – and it guided me towards a path of completing my MSW after graduation, and then later, my LMSW. There was a part of me that always knew I wanted to become a therapist, but I do believe a lot of my confidence was built throughout the time I was enrolled in SUNY New Paltz. I had phenomenal teachers (including Mr. Glenn!) and very supportive academic advisors. The psychology + MHC community was incredibly supportive, and I learned so much—especially from taking Crisis Intervention and volunteering in Oasis/Haven with such a wonderful kind cohort. A big part of being a social worker is participating in crisis intervention, so I truly have New Paltz to thank for the foundational knowledge they provided me. I have only fond memories of being enrolled in SUNY New Paltz, and I was able to form friendships that I will always appreciate. It has been a life changing phenomenon to be a Social Worker. I am forever grateful for my experiences in this field, and where it all started – at SUNY New Paltz !!!

Name: Laury Santana

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, 2022

Graduate Degree: MA in Mental Health Counseling,
Fordham University, 2024

Email: lsantana12@fordham.edu

Current position: Youth Advocate counselor / Bilingual
School Therapist / Mental Health Therapist

Life after New Paltz has been a journey filled with boundless opportunities and open doors, offering a multitude of insightful experiences. Soon after graduating from SUNY New Paltz with my Bachelor's in Psychology, I began my graduate program at Fordham University. Within this program, I had the privilege of practicing as a bilingual trauma-focused therapist intern at Kingsbridge Heights

Community Center, providing individual long-term trauma therapy treatment services in English and Spanish for children, teens, and adults from the BIPOC community affected by sexual abuse and domestic violence, as well as families with the most severe needs, often affected by mental illness, substance abuse, and extreme poverty.

Currently, I am working in a charter school as a school therapist, and this summer, I will be a Youth Advocate Counselor supporting middle school students with not only their academic goals but also social-emotional learning, highlighting mindfulness techniques, reframing negative distortions, and embracing their individuality as well as the obstacles they face as young individuals of color. My ultimate goal is to continue to explore the different pathways that mental health has to offer as a career, gaining rich experiences with different populations, cultures, and environments in order to be the best clinician I can possibly be. In the near future, I am working on receiving my licensure and preparing to apply for my PsyD/PhD degree in order to become a psychologist and, down the road, have my very own private practice with the goal of giving back to my community by working with minorities and individuals of color.

Reflecting back on my journey as a student at New Paltz, I value the academic and professional relationships more than anything. These same relationships and connections have served as a foundation and motivation for me to really push and believe in myself as a professional. My advisors, both Dr. Geher and Ms. Siuyim Ng, including the whole EOP family, always saw something special in me, which made me strive for the stars. They provided a safe environment for me to really explore my passions, dreams, and aspirations. Without them, I would have never gotten into grad school, I would have never discovered my true passion for mental health and psychology, and I would have never known that the sky is really the limit. My experiences at SUNY New Paltz shaped me as an empathetic individual, influenced me to be an ally for minorities, and allowed me to be a leader and mentor. New Paltz took me outside of my comfort zone and allowed me to prove to myself that I can accomplish everything I set my mind to. It taught me that it is not a crime to ask for help and seek support, and that being vulnerable and struggling at times is part of the journey. My experiences as a New Paltz alumni have made me resilient, and that is something that I will carry in my heart (and career) forever!!!





Name: Corinna Hayes

New Paltz Degree: 2008 with a BA in Psychology, 2008

Graduate Degree: MA in Counseling Psychology, Pacific University, 2010

Email: corinnachaize@gmail.com

Current Position: Private practice

While my jobs have been pretty wide-ranging since 2010, I've settled into having my own private practice now, providing therapy to adults. My focus is on helping people understand how their histories and traumas led to adaptations in behavior that helped them at the time, and to then generate acceptance and compassion toward the self as they work on finding change and healing. It's amazing being my own boss, setting my own hours, and continuously developing my craft.

SUNY New Paltz provided me with such an amazing open-minded community and setting to grow up (a bit anyway), explore, and find my path career-wise, and to do so in a beautiful place. I've visited New Paltz a few times since just to be in those mountains, go to some of the top-notch restaurants, and take some walks down memory lane. Hoping to come back again soon maybe with my husband and kids to show them the amazing little town of New Paltz.

Name: Ashley Sullivan

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology obtained May 2024

Email: amsully2003@gmail.com

Current Position: Masters Student at the University of Rochester Warner School of Education and Human Development, pursuing MS in Mental Health Counseling

As a transfer student, I found my transition to New Paltz to be one of ease and excitement. Being a student at SUNY New Paltz allowed me to successfully accomplish all of my goals and experience opportunities that I had not anticipated I would come across in my undergraduate career. New Paltz is home to many people from all walks of life, allowing those who seek diverse and new experiences to "meet their people." I am originally from Western New York, and sought a holistic understanding of the mind/body connection that I lacked in my Upstate education. My professors, Glenn Geher, Jonathan Vaughn, Karla Vermeulen, Andrew O'Meara, and Melissa Signor (just to name a few of the best!) opened me to a world of opportunities after I inquired with each of them about my interests in multiple areas.



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I was honored to meet women through Professor Signor who would eventually train me to become certified in the Usui Reiki system. I attended a retreat not far from New Paltz in Kerhonkson, NY in June 2023 that truly changed my life.

Dr. Vermeulen was not only my minor advisor, but also was my mentor and Student Psychological Resilience Advocate program director. She created space for me to lead group meditations on campus and provided me with opportunities to introduce fellow students who may be struggling with their own mental health to new coping mechanisms such as mindful activities like journaling and meditation. Dr. Vaughn taught my wonderful senior seminar course, Jungian Psychology, and created a classroom atmosphere like no other, introducing us to topics we can apply holistically in our lives and careers. Professor O'Meara gave me the wonderful opportunity of helping him and the Institute for Disaster Mental Health create journals for disaster responders to process and prepare for deployment. I was honored to receive the Anthony Brigandi Scholarship for this work.

My advisor, research mentor, and professor Glenn Geher saw my potential and gave me the confidence to pursue research in psychology. After taking an Evolutionary Psychology course with him, I ended up in his section of the Honors Research course and created a study alongside our classmates that would be later presented as a poster at the NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychology Society Conference in Niagara Falls of April 2024, as well as at the Student Research Symposium on the one and only SUNY New Paltz campus. Not only was I able to present research at a conference poster session, but joining the Evolutionary Psychology Lab allowed me to meet incredible and intelligent peers who I know I can always reach out to and share many memories with. SUNY New Paltz offered unique courses, with incredible professors, but also an abundance of opportunities for students to come by. If I was giving any advice to an undergrad I would definitely encourage them to "just ask!" Share your passions with others, talk with your professors and peers because you never know what opportunities might arise or what connections people are willing to share. Regardless, you will be supported by the faculty in the psychology department to accomplish what you seek to create out of your time at New Paltz.

Since graduating, I have moved back home to Rochester to be surrounded by family and friends while I pursue my MS in Mental Health Counseling at the University of Rochester Warner School of Education and Human Development. I will also be pursuing an advanced certificate in mind/body healing and wellness. Throughout the summer Maya Kardas, a fellow researcher, and I have been working to create a manuscript for academic publication on our research that we started alongside Glenn in the Honors research course. This research focuses on an evolutionary analysis of resilience, specifically theorizing that our perceived number of failures in life positively predicts our success. (So far, preliminary results show yes! woo-hoo!) I have also continued to work with Dr. Kruger from the University at Buffalo on a project regarding individuals self-reported psychedelic experiences, with hopes to create a paper focused on harm-reduction from a public health perspective. I am extremely grateful for these opportunities to work alongside wonderful people, all stemming from the gorgeous campus of SUNY New Paltz.



Name: Jason Palmer

New Paltz Degree: BA in Psychology, 2024

Email: palmerj9@newpaltz.edu / jasonjp3045@gmail.com

Current position: Clinical Mental Health Counseling Graduate Student



Currently, I am planning to attend Marist College to take the next steps toward obtaining my MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling starting in the Fall 2024 semester. Honestly, I couldn't have been in this position if I never attended New Paltz, as the four years I spent here helped me learn a lot more about myself that helped facilitate positive growth in many different facets.

Initially, I planned on obtaining a bachelor's degree in Computer Science because I always had the dream of creating a video game for many to enjoy. After a year and a half, I came to realize that computer science was not meant for me, as my GPA dropped from 3.64 to 3.08 in only a year's time. After reminiscing about the introductory psychology course I thoroughly enjoyed taking with Professor Bobby Bui, I declared Psychology as my major and it ended up being one of the best decisions I have ever made. Thankfully, I was able to graduate with honors while also winning two school-based awards for psychology.

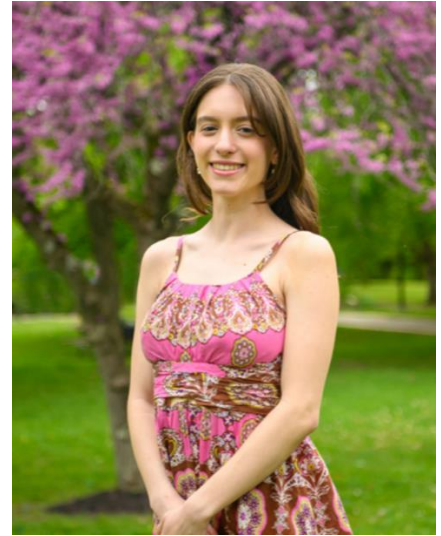
Throughout the two and a half years I spent as a Psychology major, I was able to develop certain skills that I never would have thought I had when I was planning to become a Computer Science major. The opportunities given by the Psychology Department helped me step out of my comfort zone and pursue activities and interactions that my 18-year-old self would never believe. In summary, I learned how to be a more effective speaker in public through multiple presentations and talks, a writer who is able to get their points across, and I learned how to work effectively as a team within a research study. Most notably, I worked with my mentor/professor/advisor Dr. Glenn Geher and the Fall 2023 Honors Positive Evolutionary Psychology Seminar to create the Revenge Study, which is a study that looks to examine psychological variables that may affect a person's tendency to take revenge in the form of a hypothetical game. It has been a chore trying to get the data to read properly, but Dr. Geher and I recently made a breakthrough and hopefully the data will yield some eye-opening results.

I am grateful for my aforementioned mentor Dr. Glenn Geher helping me realize what I am capable of and constantly supporting me throughout my journey at New Paltz. He first taught me in his Spring 2022 Psychological Statistics class, and the way he taught intrigued me so much to the point that I had him as my professor for another three classes, alongside being my advisor. Lastly, I am also grateful for Dr. Maurey Levitz, as he helped teach me how to incorporate different perspectives in my thinking, along with indirectly pushing me to become the best version of myself. I will always be forever grateful to every professor that has taught me here at New Paltz, as everybody has played a role in my development. Now, I look forward to embracing the journey of becoming a licensed clinical mental health counselor and addressing under-the-radar problems adversely affecting people's mental health to help foster a generation that knows how to properly address challenges affecting our mental health today.

Profile of SUNY New Paltz 2024 Valedictorian, Psychology Major Julia Lombard

(Shared with permission from University Office
of Communication and Marketing)

Julia Lombard '24 (Psychology) came to SUNY New Paltz in the fall of 2020 and found her voice as a Honors Program student focused on evolutionary psychology and as a singer with a campus A Capella group. "All of the experiences I had at SUNY New Paltz helped me come out of my shell," she said. "New Paltz allowed me to grow as a researcher, a student, a friend, a performer and a collaborator."



Today, Lombard is the Class of 2024 Valedictorian, preparing to deliver the Student Address at the Saturday Undergraduate Commencement Ceremony on May 18, and reflecting on a storied collegiate career marked by academic excellence and a strong creative outlet with the Sexy Pitches, a long-running New Paltz student organization featuring all-treble singers. "Collaboration is one of the biggest takeaways from my experience at New Paltz," she said. "Whether I was on stage or presenting a project, I was surrounded by peers and faculty who empowered me to be my best self."

The New City, New York, native threw herself into academics early on, volunteering as a first-year student to be a part of the New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Lab, led by Psychology Professor Glenn Geher. She later joined the lab as a full member after gaining insight through readings on social and evolutionary psychology, and eventually rose to the rank of Evolutionary Psychology Lab co-supervisor. "I'm fascinated with how emotions can help us adapt to and navigate certain situations," she said. "Learning more about the psychology behind this phenomenon inspired my curiosity even more."

The 2024 President's Award recipient put that knowledge into practice as an undergraduate researcher for her Honors Program thesis. Lombard developed a survey- and experimental-based series of studies to gauge the psychological correlates of the emotion of awe. The experiment had participants peer into virtual reality goggles through which they were presented with different vignettes, allowing Lombard to draw preliminary conclusions about possible correlations between awe, perception, and other positive life outcomes. "In my first study I found that having regular feelings of awe was a significant predictor of life satisfaction and well-being" she said. "In the second study I wanted to see how individuals respond to both ordinary and extraordinary life circumstances. Experiencing 360-degree larger-than-life phenomena can elicit a strong reaction of awe, demonstrating the potential use of virtual reality in a lab setting." Lombard shared her work at this year's Student Research Symposium, an annual showcase of students' innovative scholarship and creative activity. Her academic stewardship also includes a role as co-president of the Psi Chi Honor Society, where she organized panels on important topics in the field. Additionally, Lombard lent her expertise in psychology as a peer tutor and supplemental instructor with the Center for Student Success. "My goals in working at the center are to help students get the best educational experience they can," she said. Now, the self-described "homebody" is advancing to pursue a doctorate in social psychology at Florida State University.

"It'll be hard to be away from friends and family, but I know this is the right move for me in continuing my studies and teaching," she said.



**Congratulations to our
2024 Psychology Students of Excellence!**

Our end-of-semester awards celebration ceremony for our amazing graduating students is always a highlight for students and faculty! We wish all of the class of 2024 the best - please keep in touch and let us know where your SUNY New Paltz Psychology degree takes you!



**ALUMNI
— 2024 —
REUNION**

OCTOBER 17-20

Come back to New Paltz for Alumni Weekend, 2024 – October 17-20!

Our campus' alumni reunion is slated for October 17-20, 2024. Psychology faculty member Glenn Geher will lead a hike on Sunday, 10/20 at 10 a.m., and his band, Questionable Authorities, will perform a concert on behalf of the alum on 10/18 at Bacchus at 8pm. Come back to New Paltz and join the fun!

Full information on the weekend schedule can be found here:

<https://www.newpaltz.edu/reunion-2024>

What are YOU up to? Please send your news to geherg@newpaltz.edu, vermeulk@newpaltz.edu, or grossig@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/>