

# THE SELF MONITOR

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

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## Message from the Department Chair, Dr. Jonathan Raskin



My first year as chair was a busy one! Perhaps the biggest news was the retirement of Dr. Alison Nash at the end of the Spring 2018 semester. To celebrate Dr. Nash's 30+ years at New Paltz, the department held its first-ever "Last Lecture" at which Dr. Nash gave a talk to a packed lecture hall entitled "Men Hunt and Women Nest: Challenging Claims about Intrinsic Gender Differences." The talk was followed by a celebratory retirement dinner at Garvan's. We wish Dr. Nash a wonderful retirement!

The department also made a new hire for the Fall 2018 semester. Dr. Dan Li will join the department as an assistant professor of counselor education. She has her doctorate in counselor education from the University of Iowa and we are thrilled by her addition to the department faculty. The department is also pleased to welcome Dr. Matthew Wice as a one-year lecturer. Dr. Wice hails from the New School and will be teaching developmental and research methods classes this year.

The Psychology and Counselor Education Graduate Programs saw big changes during 2017-18. The Psychology Graduate Program launched its new MS in Psychological Science degree, while the Counselor Education Program revamped the curriculum for its MS degrees in mental health and school counseling and also completed a CACREP self-study. Students entering the programs in Fall 2018 will complete the new curricula.

Our undergraduates again made us proud in 2017-18. Two of them – Trisha Chabria and Katrina Scarimbolo – were awarded Chancellor's Awards for Excellence. Congratulations to both of them!

Finally, the Psychology Department reestablished a Fundraising Account this year to raise money for student and faculty research, among other initiatives. We even have a "Donate Now" button on the Department homepage:

<http://www.newpaltz.edu/psychology/>

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## New Paltz Psychology Faculty Teach in Chongqing, China



*l-r: Lamei (Sheffee) Luo, Glenn Geher, Jacqueline Murray, Tabitha Holmes, Alison Nash*

As part of a new international program that includes primary education students at Chongqing University of Education, three psychology faculty members, Alison Nash, Tabitha Holmes, and Glenn Geher, taught classes this past summer in China. While this program focuses on primary education, there was a need for a class that met a science requirement, which was met by Dr. Geher's course, Evolution for Everyone. Meanwhile, Dr. Holmes and Dr. Nash co-taught a course in Child Development for the program.

With over 30 million people, Chongqing is one of the world's largest cities, with a deep and rich history, and it's home to the world-famous Chongqing hot pot, which is not for the faint of heart! Later in the summer, several students from these classes came to New Paltz as part of the cross-cultural and language-immersion goals of the program. The program is off to a great start and we look forward to continued educational development with these students.

## Parting Thoughts from Dr. Alison Nash

After over three decades of service, Dr. Alison Nash retired at the end of the Spring 2018 semester, after delivering a final public lecture summarizing some of her research. She shared her reflections in this interview with Glenn Geher.

**Glenn Geher:** So I'd say that you have had an ideal academic career over the years. What would you say are some of the high points of your time at New Paltz?

**Alison Nash:** Moving to my new office! But of course, there are many high points, so I'll focus on what an "ideal" career has meant to me. I feel fortunate to have had a job in which I could share my interests and passions with others, working with colleagues and students on research projects and discussing intellectually stimulating ideas in the classroom. While I have a deep interest in the ideas themselves, it has also been meaningful to provide students with the tools for precise, analytical thinking – in general through teaching statistics and research methods, and in relation to child development, which I hope can guide students' dealings with children and families (whether as professionals, parents, and/or relatives).

**GG:** What one piece of advice would you give to any student?

**AN:** Be confident and give voice to your ideas and perspectives while at the same time being open to other points of view. Work at integrating the two. Don't be afraid to make mistakes, or judge yourself harshly about them. Mistakes are opportunities to learn.

**GG:** What one piece of advice would you give to any faculty member?

**AN:** I'll repeat part of what I said above, be open to other points of view, don't be quick to judge.

**GG:** What one book would you recommend that every psychology student should read - and why?

**AN:** Being an academic entails a great deal of reading. While the ideas in academic journals are quite interesting, the writing is often dry and tedious. I am particularly enamored with two books, both by eminent scholars with many publications in prestigious academic journals. These two books are written in styles that are clever and amusing, and at the same time make complex ideas and concepts quite accessible. Both challenge widely-held ideas about human nature through careful analysis, supported by comprehensive evidence from the scholarly literature.

Mark Blumberg's *Basic Instinct* deconstructs the notion of human nature itself by critically examining the use of the term 'instinct' as an explanation for a variety of behaviors. Rather than simply accepting that behaviors are innate, appearing fully formed, he presents comprehensive and compelling evidence indicating that many so-called innate behaviors *develop*. He convincingly shows that in order to truly understand human 'nature,' the contexts and experiences involved in the development of particular behaviors must be identified.

In *Delusions of Gender*, Cordelia Fine also critically examines the notion of innate behaviors, but as a neuroscientist, focuses on claims that 'hardwired' differences in men's and women's brains lead to gender differences in cognition and behavior. She meticulously critiques the evidence for these claims, and in addition, offers an alternative and well-supported framework for understanding gender differences, i.e., the plasticity of the human brain coupled with the salience of gender in children's everyday environments and experiences. As Fine writes in her conclusion, development takes places within "*the relentless gendering of everything around the child – from clothes, shoes, bedding, lunch boxes, even giftwrap, as well the wider-world around . . . [children] continually watch it, hear it, see it; are clothed in it, eat off it.*" Fine makes a compelling case for the subtitle of her book, *How Our Minds, Society, and Neurosexism Create Difference*.

If I can go back to Question 1 (high points), I was thrilled by the opportunity that Dr. Grossi and I had to bring both Mark Blumberg and Cordelia Fine to SUNY New Paltz as speakers for the Cognitive Science Colloquium Series. As with their writing, their cogent arguments supported by compelling evidence gave the audience much to think about in terms of common assumptions about innate behaviors and intrinsic gender differences. (*Interview continued on next page*)



Dr. Nash delivering her valedictory lecture, "Men Hunt and Women Nest: Challenging Claims About Intrinsic Gender Differences," to a standing-room only audience in May 2018

### Parting Thoughts from Dr. Alison Nash, continued

**GG:** You have traveled quite a bit over the years. What one place stands out to most - and why?

**AN:** Traveling opens the mind, so I have learned from and enjoyed all my travels. As you know, my last trip was to Chongqing, China, which was different from previous travels as I taught a course at the Chongqing University of Education. Besides very much enjoying my connections with the students, it was quite meaningful to teach the last class in my career to students from a different culture and who had somewhat limited English. The students were eager to learn and to master both English and the course material. It was my job as a teacher to communicate complex academic concepts in ways that students with somewhat limited English could understand. This is the heart of teaching – finding ways to bridge the gap between our own expertise and what our students know. I enjoyed the challenge of finding creative ways to bridge this gap with my Chinese students. As part of the process includes understanding where students are, along the way the teacher becomes the learner. As such, I have learned a great deal from my Chinese students, as well as from my many years with SUNY New Paltz students.

**GG:** What are the plans for your next chapter in life?

**AN:** I have worked since Junior High School, so as I said in my last lecture, the notion of not working is both thrilling and terrifying. But here are some random plans: banjo camp, a trip to Italy, reading for pleasure in the daytime, having no plans at all and just seeing what the day brings.

### Alison Nash's "Last Lecture" and Retirement Party

By Alessandra Moss,  
Psychology Graduate Student



*Left: Friends, colleagues, and students fete Dr. Nash with music and dance at her retirement party*

Dr. Alison Nash retired at the end of last semester after more than three decades of teaching at New Paltz. On May 7<sup>th</sup> she gave a last lecture titled "Men Hunt and Women Nest: Challenging Claims about Intrinsic Gender Differences," an elegantly condensed overview of over 30 years of research.

In front of a packed auditorium, Dr. Nash outlined the "history of an idea" and told the story of how her research questions had evolved over the course of her career.

Among a wide array of compelling topics, particularly moving to this writer, was her discussion about how scientific research permeates popular culture, explaining that scholars have tremendous power to influence the status quo and a duty to wield that power responsibly. She told a rapt audience about her investigations into John Bowlby's attachment theory, which was a basis for many of the 1970's media messages that mothers should not be in the work force but rather stay at home. In a number of experiments, Dr. Nash did not find support for the idea that infants are biologically prepared to form attachments primarily with their mothers. She suggested that infants form attachments with many caregivers, and that, raising a child takes a village.

The talk was followed by a reception and celebratory dinner which was attended by Dr. Nash's family, friends, colleagues, and students. After dinner, the toasting began, and, one by one, people from all facets of Dr. Nash's life told stories about how she had personally inspired them, changed their lives, or, in several cases, introduced them to their life partner. Toasts were followed by live music played by

professors and students, and a clogging performance by one of Dr. Nash's graduate teaching assistants. The evening's celebrations demonstrated the tremendous legacy that Dr. Nash leaves behind in her retirement.

Described by one of her colleagues as "one of the most intellectually curious and open people I know" (Holmes, T., 2018), Dr. Nash has led by example and inspired countless students' intellectual curiosity. Her teaching style is not for those who enjoy rote memorization, but rather, calls for a deep understanding of the material. Always asking why, Dr. Nash inspires an inquisitive attitude towards knowledge that is invaluable to any learner.

In many classes I can remember Dr. Nash putting the lecture on hold because a question came up – and she would encourage the whole class to search for the answer. The lesson was clear: be curious!

Dr. Nash exemplifies intellectual curiosity and openness and leads by example for her students. Those who have been fortunate enough to have her as a professor can often be found congregating in the hallway outside her office, stopping in to say hi, ask a question, or chat. While emphasizing serious academic inquiry, Dr. Nash also leaves room for humor. Laughter can often be heard from her office during meetings with students.

Having had the honor of being a TA for Dr. Nash this past year, I can say that working with her has been one of the most rich and inspiring experiences of my life. There is no doubt about it, Dr. Alison Nash will be missed very much.

## Welcome to our Newest Full-Time Faculty Member, Dr. Dan Li!



Dan Li, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor of Counselor Education in the Department of Psychology at SUNY New Paltz. She received her doctorate in Rehabilitation and Counselor Education (CACREP-accredited) at the University of Iowa in May 2018. Meanwhile, she earned a minor in Applied Statistics at the University of Iowa. She has skills in Markov chain analysis, sequential analysis, experimental designs, as well as correlation and regression techniques. Her dissertation was about *Transitional Dynamics of Clinical Supervision: Using Markov Chain Analysis*. Prior to her Ph.D. study, Dan received her M.A. in Professional School Counseling (CACREP-accredited) from Appalachian State University in 2014. She is a National Certified Counselor (NCC) and a Licensed School Counselor (LSC; K-12) in North Carolina.

During her Ph.D. study (2014-2018), Dan was awarded the Presidential Graduate Research Fellowship (PGRF; the highest graduate award conferred by the University of Iowa). In addition, she was granted the Graduate Student Research Award, Graduate Student Senate (GSS) Travel Funds Award, Office of the Dean Graduate Student Travel Award, and Audrey Qualls Travel Award three times, respectively. Dan serves as a peer reviewer for the Journal of International Students (JIS). She is a Regional Facilitator of the International Students and Faculty Interest Network (ISFIN) in the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). Dan also serves as a committee member for the Supervision Interest Network (SIN) in the ACES. Dan favors interdisciplinary research. Her primary research interests and publications focus on: (a) relational dynamics of clinical supervision; (b) professional development of international counseling students and faculty; (c) career development and counseling; (d) obesity in children and adolescents; and (e) mental health of internationally adopted children.

Dan grew up in China. In 2009, she earned her B.A. in English from Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology. Later, Dan went to Hunan University of Technology for her graduate study in Linguistics. Her master's thesis was about *Philosophical Interpretation of W. V. Quine's Thesis of Indeterminacy of Translation*. Dan received her first M.A. in 2012. In her last year of studying linguistics, Dan found interpersonal communication can be a powerful tool in shaping and changing people's ways of thinking, behaving, and feeling. So, she decided to study counseling in the United States.

Dan enjoys creative cooking the most during her spare time. She also loves group fitness classes that energize and empower people.

## Faculty Research News

Assistant Professor Elizabeth Hirshorn is researching the relationship between word processing and face processing. Past research has shown that the acquisition of literacy, which is largely left-lateralized in the brain, changes the neural organization of face processing to become largely right lateralized. However, there are individual differences in how words are processed which might have an effect on this change. The goal of the current research study is to examine if and how individual differences in word processing are correlated with neural and behavioral changes in face processing. Dr. Hishorn is working on a second project comparing musicians and non-musicians to try to tease apart how musical training and reading may be related.

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Associate Professor Karla Vermeulen is writing a book for the Oxford University Press Emerging Adulthood Series. *Generation Disaster: Coming of Age in the Post-9/11 World* will examine the developmental impact on today's emerging adults of their experiences growing up in a world changed by terrorism, disasters, war, climate change, and economic crisis.

★★★

Professor Douglas Maynard's Positive Play Lab is currently creating and validating a new self-report measure to assess "play fulfillment" in adults, or the extent to which someone feels that their need for play has been met recently. They then plan to conduct research with this new measure to assess how play fulfillment (or the lack thereof) relates to psychological well-being and other outcomes (e.g., creativity, empathy).

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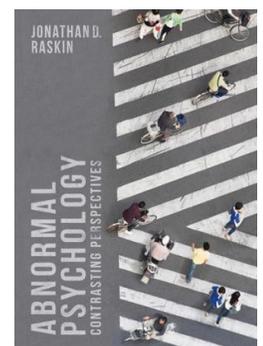
Associate Professor Corwin Senko, in collaboration with a student and Lucy Walker at the Office of Institutional Research, is doing research exploring the challenges that new students, especially those first in their family to attend college, experience adjusting to (a) being at college and (b) being away from home. They hypothesize that these two adjustment challenges impact students' motivation, performance, and retention in unique ways. They hope eventually to find ways to help students cope with each adjustment challenge.

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Associate Professor Greta Winograd is first author on a new article, "Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) at a Selective Public University: Initial Findings from a Longitudinal Evaluation Study," that was published in *The Learning Assistance Review*.

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Professor Jonathan Raskin's textbook, *Abnormal Psychology: Contrasting Perspectives*, is due to be published in October by Macmillan International Higher Education.



## Psychology Alumni Profiles

We always love to hear what our former students accomplish after they leave SUNY New Paltz! Here are updates from several of our alumni – and next we want to hear from you. Please send your news to [geherg@newpaltz.edu](mailto:geherg@newpaltz.edu), [vermeulk@newpaltz.edu](mailto:vermeulk@newpaltz.edu), or [raskini@newpaltz.edu](mailto:raskini@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.

### Emily Killian

**New Paltz degree: MS Mental Health Counseling, 2016**

**Email: eakillian1@gmail.com**

**Current role: Undergraduate Practice Opportunities Program  
Student Coordinator at Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

I'm currently working at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I'm one of the Student Program Coordinators for a program called the Undergraduate Practice Opportunities Program (UPOP). In short, my team of five and I work with the sophomore class, teaching professional development along with the top skills employers identify as necessary for success. We also help them get stellar summer internships at companies as big as Google and Facebook to the smaller, very innovative startups around the globe. This role comes with a lot of career counseling, and at times mental health, and my background and experience at New Paltz has helped me integrate so well into this role. I work with roughly 300-500 students, and wake up every day eager to go to work!



Before coming to MIT, I had been working as a Staff Therapist at South Bay Community Services in Lynn, MA, doing outreach mental health work. I had a caseload of clients that I would travel to and perform therapy right in their home. I had been working in a very poverty-stricken area, which at times had been really unsafe. After a few months there, I realized how much I yearned to be back in the atmosphere that New Paltz provided me, when I worked as an Undergraduate Advisor in the Psychology department under Glenn Geher and as a Teaching Assistant for Intro to Psychology for Sarah Shuwairi. I left South Bay and started the long process of job hunting, and with the right timing, a lot of patience and stress, and maybe even fate, I ended up with this opportunity at MIT.

Working in the Psychology department at New Paltz as both an advisor and TA helped me realize how much I enjoyed working with students; teaching and helping them to also find their passion and navigate their future career path. My time as an advisor and TA was so valuable—without those opportunities I probably would not have stumbled across what I truly love doing. Another important thing I learned after my time at New Paltz was that my degree is very applicable to many different career paths, and I don't feel restricted to just mental health counseling. My training through my academics and learning from the experience of my wonderful professors at New Paltz has certainly helped me to be successful in my current role, and for that I am so grateful!



### Daniel Gambacorta

**New Paltz degree: Psychology BA, minors in Sociology and Evolutionary Studies, 2009**

**Email: daniel.gambacorta@utrgv.edu**

**Current role: Lecturer**

I am a Lecturer in the Department of Psychological Science at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. I teach classes as well as do research into topics such as social status, emotion, and evolutionary approaches to human behavior. I would not have the career I have today if not for my experience at SUNY New Paltz. I entered as a psychology major, but was very unsure as to what I was going to do with my life. When I took a class in Evolutionary Psychology I was inspired to want to learn more and do research myself. I am grateful to all my instructors for guiding my intellectual development. Thank you New Paltz Psychology Department!

## Psychology Alumni Profiles



**Vania Rolón**

**New Paltz degree:**

**MA in Psychology, 2017**

**Email: 1525141@brunel.ac.uk**

**Current role: PhD candidate in Culture and Evolution**

After graduating from New Paltz in the summer of 2017, I got accepted for a PhD in Culture and Evolution at Brunel University London. I began in January, 2018, with David Schmitt, one of the leads in the field of sex differences and founder of the International Sexuality Description Project, as my adviser. Our latest study on the relationships among sexual orientation, sociosexuality, and Dark Triad across cultures was presented at the third New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Independent Conference (EPIC III). Aside from my research with David, I also recently got selected for a research studentship, which will help pay for most of my degree.

I would not be in a PhD program if not for the experiences I obtained at SUNY New Paltz. Being part of the Evolutionary Psychology Lab and one of Glenn Geher's students helped me interact with several people in the field through academic conferences, including David whom I met during one of these events. Additionally, I can say with certainty that I learned most of my current statistics knowledge by working as a statistics TA (thanks Alison Nash and Doug Maynard) and by attending the graduate statistics courses (thanks Doug Maynard, again). Both of these experiences secured my admission at Brunel, as well as my current studentship. Interacting with different faculty members was the perfect way to learn and incorporate their strengths into my own research and teaching, making me the PhD student I am today.



**Richard H Holler**

**New Paltz degree: MA in Psychology, 2017**

**Email: holler@oakland.edu**

**Current role: Doctoral Student, Oakland University**

In high school, I believed that I could become the President of the United States overnight (which is now under reconsideration). In college, I believed that I could just complete a "To-Do" list and then become a tenured professor in psychology, but then I learned that the more I learn, the more capable—and hence more employable—I am. Learning the ins and outs of any career usually doesn't happen overnight, it takes time, a lot of time.

While under the tutelage of Dr. Glenn Geher and as a master's student at SUNY New Paltz, I found the opportunities to invest my time to become resourceful and to re-evaluate my career trajectory. Despite exhausting my precious time in my studies and, thus, sacrificing bits and pieces of my old self, I found bits and pieces of my future self.

With a dose of luck, a large dose of commitment to a viable "To-Do" list, and a larger dose of ambition, silly beliefs evolve into serious actions. In high school, I found ambition; in college, I found commitment; and at SUNY New Paltz, I found my luck. I am now a staffing coordinator in the city of Philadelphia (many thanks to the EvoS Studies Program) and am preparing to begin my expedited PhD psychology program at Oakland University in Fall 2018. Thank you, SUNY New Paltz Department of Psychology!

## Psychology Alumni Profiles

**Danielle Lutek**

**New Paltz degree: B.A. Psychology, 2017**

**Email: dlutek@bu.edu**

**Current role: Masters student, Boston University School of Social Work**

“Every time I walk into my class, I’m going to see your face. You made my dreams come true. You have the personality to listen and you always say the right things.” As I listen holding the phone to my ear, it’s hard not to be tearful. As the Welfare Law Unit social work intern at Greater Boston Legal Services, I’ve experienced so much this year and working with clients like this one, are what made my experience at GBLS so enriching. Essentially, this agency is the “last stop” low-income clients have for assistance. My work at GBLS was predominately case management, although I’ve been able to develop powerful therapeutic alliances with some of my long-term clients like the one quoted above. Clients are referred to me by attorneys and paralegals in the welfare unit when they come across something that is not necessarily legal in nature, but is still an issue a client can use help with.

This client is a Muslim American single mother of 6 children who came to Boston when she was in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade as a war refugee from Ethiopia. She married at age 19 and then spent over fifteen years silencing her dreams to attend school because she was trapped at home by her abusive husband. Because she is now divorced and her children are older, her work with me stemmed from the determination to finally pursue her dreams of obtaining her high school diploma. I’m truly inspired by this client’s unwavering determination in getting the education she’s dreamt of. It is remarkable that she has been able to remain so hopeful and tenacious, despite her battle with PTSD, chronic pain, and other health problems, on top of the stigma and discrimination she experiences on a daily basis as a Muslim woman in America.

Working in conjunction with her legal advocate who prevented her from losing her basic income, I helped her find and enroll in an adult diploma program willing to accommodate her health issues and I helped her report the hate crime she experienced, en route to GBLS, in which a stranger at the MBTA station spat and cursed at her for being Muslim. I helped her navigate the incredibly confusing changes in the MassHealth system, request a new Naturalization Certificate as her ex-husband stole her original copy, as well as helped her with other issues. I am so grateful that I had the opportunity to work with this client on each and every one of these issues. Instead of giving up on our work together when feeling overwhelmed or in physical pain, she pushed forward. As I leave GBLS this year and pursue my social work journey, I will forever aim to embody this client’s resilience.

For as long as I can remember, I’ve wanted to practice mental health therapy. Getting my B.A. in Psychology at SUNY New Paltz really give me the important foundation needed to get me to who and where I am today. I owe so much of learning to the Psychology, the Deaf Studies, and the Women’s Gender and Sexuality faculty and courses I’ve taken. I’m especially grateful for OASIS/HAVEN, the peer counseling organization on campus, for all of the wonderful memories, long-lasting relationships, and skills I have learned that have carried me onto my MSW program at Boston University School of Social Work.

I’m so happy to be at BU School of Social Work! I just finished my first year of a two-year Master of Social Work (MSW) program. The best thing about this program, is that I feel like with each new class I take, I am interested in a new theory, population, and approach to therapy! It makes me so excited to learn and discover where my professional journey will take me.

My opportunities with my MSW feel endless. Next year, I will be interning at South Boston Behavioral Health Clinic where I will be doing intakes for new clients and doing individual therapy with clients with a range of mental health and substance abuse issues. I am thrilled about this opportunity and cannot wait to see where my journey takes me next.



## Psychology Alumni Profiles

### Kristyn Muller

**New Paltz degree: B.A. Psychology & Interpersonal/Intercultural Communication, 2010**

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**Current role: Impact Analyst, Open SUNY, SUNY System Administration**



I am currently the Impact Analyst for Open SUNY within SUNY System Administration. In this role, I evaluate the effectiveness of Open SUNY's services, analyze how online learning impacts SUNY's overall goals, and develop ways to share data to inform the continuous improvement of SUNY's online learning practices. I was previously the Assistant Director of Residential Life for University Apartments at the University at Albany where I was very involved in assessment initiatives on campus. I concurrently served as the part-time Assessment & Data Analyst for the Division of Student Affairs and helped coordinate the strategic planning process for the division. I recently earned my Ph.D. in Educational Policy and Leadership from the University at Albany.

My experiences at SUNY New Paltz directly influenced my career and academic path. While I was enrolled at New Paltz, I was the President of the Residence Hall Student Association, a Resident Assistant, a Welcome Center employee, and a member of several other student groups. I had the privilege of getting to know several senior-level administrators, which opened my eyes to career opportunities within higher education. Further, through my academic coursework, especially within the Psychology Department, I had the chance to work closely with faculty members to conduct research related to education, learning motivation, and students' co-curricular involvement. These experiences provided the foundation for my career and academic decisions so far and will continue to be valuable moving forward. I am extremely grateful for my time at New Paltz and proud to continue to be part of the SUNY system.



### Jenna Weinstein

**New Paltz degree: B.A. Psychology, Minor in Evolutionary Studies, 2010**

**Email: Weinsteinj88@gmail.com**

**Current role: Master Resilience Trainer-Performance Expert, Fort Stewart, GA - US Army**

I was on the Women's Rugby team at my time in New Paltz and wanted to stay involved in sports and athletics when I went to graduate school. I focused my graduate studies in Sport Psychology, focusing on the psychology of injury and athletic identity. After finishing my Master's Degree from Springfield College, I moved to Boston to work for a non-profit organization named Journey Forward. I had the amazing opportunity to work with spinal cord injury patients, stroke patients, and traumatic brain injury patients. After a couple of years in Boston, a new opportunity presented itself to me. A friend recommended I try applying my skills and knowledge to the Military population – so I did.

Fast forward four and a half years; I have conducted training to the US Army Soldiers and families in mental toughness, which is a combination of Positive Psychology and Sport Psychology principles. I have worked with Army units by teaching techniques on how to focus under pressure, how to go into uncertain situations with confidence, how to block out distractions, how to mentally prepare yourself for demanding tasks, and how to maintain an effective mindset throughout trainings and qualifications. I never would have imagined that I would be teaching Soldiers and become a part of the Military community. I have developed a new level of understanding and respect for what Service Members and their families sacrifice on a regular basis.

When I attended SUNY New Paltz, I knew that I had a drive and desire to be different. I worked closely with a couple faculty members at New Paltz that helped me believe I can accomplish anything that I want in life. Dr. Glenn Geher was a huge advocate for me, and continues to be to this day! Dr. Peter Kaufman encouraged my interest in the sports field, especially during his course of Sociology of Sport. I became more aware of societal impacts that sports and activities can have on people and cultures. I recall, in my senior year at New Paltz, Dr. Geher let me take his graduate level course. I did a presentation on the evolution of physical activity and how modern day humans are drastically less active than early humans were. I continue to be interested in what programs and motivations will promote a healthy and active lifestyle. I hope in the future to return to school for a doctoral degree in Exercise Sciences and do more research on topics such as fitness identity and the psychological impacts from physical activity. I continue to play rugby with local teams here in Savannah, GA and I also participate in Crossfit. My four years at New Paltz helped me develop the confidence to achieve my goals and to always push myself outside of my comfort zone.

**The Next Big Idea - New Paltz Evolutionary Psychology Lab  
Hosts NEEPS XII: Sweet Home Hudson Valley  
By Amanda Baroni & Jacqueline M. Di Santo  
MA in Psychology, 2018**

Carrying on a tradition, a group of psychology undergraduate and graduate students hosted the 12th annual conference of the NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychology Society (NEEPS), right here on the SUNY New Paltz campus in its birthplace of the Sweet Home Hudson Valley. Attendees of the conference could be seen walking around the university and exploring the village of New Paltz, as well as trying crickets at the new Mexican restaurant (!), wearing their hippie/tie-dye best.

With its home in the Hudson Valley, NEEPS has become a well-traveled society. Past conferences have been located at universities all over the east coast, as well as Canada. Returning to New Paltz this year, the conference hosted roughly a hundred scholars and students. While the conference targets the Northeast, people traveled from across the world (including South America and Asia) both to present and hear about the newest research being done in the field of evolutionary behavioral sciences. The interdisciplinary and lively nature of the field was demonstrated at this conference with presentations covering topics such as relationships, positive evolutionary psychology, business, fictional characters in novels, music and more. In addition to simply attending, many of the New Paltz students gave presentations in the form of an oral or poster presentation.

The conference was co-hosted by Amanda Baroni (2018), recent alum of SUNY New Paltz and the EP Lab and Dr. Glenn Geher, professor of Psychology and director of the EP Lab at SUNY New Paltz. Current lab member and co-coordinator, Jacqueline M. Di Santo, with the help of lab members Julie A. Planke (lab co-coordinator), Alec Goldstein, Graham Thomson (visiting scholar), and Kelsey Newhook (recent lab alum), took care of decor for conference's banquet - equipped with hippie-themed decorations to commemorate the conference's return to its home in New Paltz. From the photobooth with a tie-dye backdrop accompanied by hippie-themed props to conference members walking around with round John Lennon-esque sunglasses, the hippie-theme concept set the scene for a groovy night full of food, friends, and fun. The president of the society, Joel T. Wade from Bucknell University, summed NEEPS up best when he said what was once known as "the little evolutionary society that could" can now be considered "the evolutionary society that does." For more information on the NorthEastern Evolutionary Psychology Society, past conferences, and how to get in on the fun, visit the society's website at [www.neepsociety.com](http://www.neepsociety.com).



*NEEPS participants  
getting into the groove*

**E.P.I.C - A fitting name for an epic conference**

This past Spring's Evolutionary Psychology class, taught by Dr. Glenn Geher, was bursting at the seams with almost 100 eager students from all disciplines ready to learn about the intricacies of evolution and how they can be applied to psychology today. A long-standing tradition of this class is the students' exciting final research proposals. Each student spends his or her semester picking topics within the field that he or she finds especially interesting. At the end of the semester each student produces a research proposal highlighting exactly what kind of field-related research he or she would be interested in pursuing. The project is always a hit with the students as it allows them to explore something that truly interests them and gives them a taste as to what it's like to really conduct research. Three years ago, Dr. Geher and a few of his students had the idea to immerse students even further into the field of research. What if he took an entire 3-hour class period and had current and past members of his Evolutionary Psychology lab show the students what it looks like when you follow through with the research proposals you make in class? This idea started the first ever Evolutionary Psychology Independent Conference (EPIC). Three years later the third annual Evolutionary Psychology Independent Conference was a huge success.

The auditorium that normally housed 100 students every Thursday afternoon was filled with students, faculty, and community members, all ready to listen to an engaging group of presenters. The people presenting were alumni, current graduate students, and current undergraduate students from Dr. Geher's Evolutionary Psychology lab. Like the students in the class, the lab members all share different interests within the field and have conducted very different studies using the lens of evolutionary psychology. The conference was a beautiful display of the multidisciplinary nature of the field of evolutionary psychology. There were presentations on the perception of beauty and attractiveness, mating psychology and sexuality studies, the link between emotions and music, and even the reproductive success of hammerhead sharks! Presenters included alumni Vania Rolon and Nicole (Wedberg) Delaney along with visiting scholar (and alum) Graham Tomson, current graduate students Amanda Baroni, Olivia Jewell, Nick Primavera, Jacqueline Di Santo, and Julie Planke - along with undergraduate students Kelsey Newhook and Alec Goldstein. All in all, the conference was a huge success and the students got a lot out of the entire experience.

## A Walk into the Past – The Ancestor’s Trail: USA

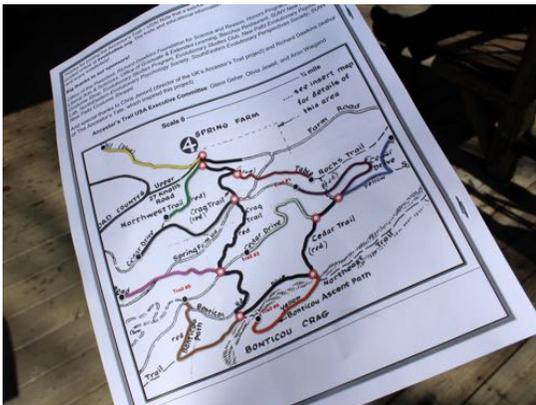
by Olivia Jewell, MA, 2018

In April of 2018 The Ancestor’s Trail: USA project unveiled its first iteration. A collaboration between SUNY New Paltz and the Mohonk Preserve, the Ancestor’s Trail project is aimed at giving visitors a new, accessible, and interactive way to look at evolution. Along with an impressive team, the trail would not have been possible without Aron Weigand, Glenn Geher, and Olivia Jewell, the trail’s lead coordinators. The original Ancestor’s Trail took place in Bristol, towards the western side of Great Britain. While on holiday in Spain, science teacher, Chris Jenord, witnessed people on a religious pilgrimage, and the idea for the Ancestor’s Trail was born. The overall concept for the trail is based off a book, “The Ancestor’s Tale,” published in 2004 by Richard Dawkins. The book maps evolution back to the first form of single-celled life, which Dawkins called “Canturbury.” And in a great moment for this project, Dawkins made a generous donation to help with the fiscal costs of the event!



Jenord’s idea would allow for people to take a symbolic pilgrimage back to the dawn of life, by following various trails “back in time.” This trail would give visitors an entirely new way to look at evolution, see the way living things are connected, and take science buffs on a pilgrimage through history. The design of the trails is essentially a tree of life superimposed on to real hiking trails. The hope is to give visitors both a physical representation of deep time, as well as an interactive way to explore the ways through which all living things are evolutionarily connected. Guidebooks were written so that visitors could see brief explanations of each of the available trails, maps of the whole event, and a distance-time scale which illustrated how many thousands, or millions of years would be represented by a single, human step. On the day of the opening of the Ancestor’s Trail: USA, there were costumed trail guides, a bagpiper (Alex Bartholomew of Geology), a photographer, a volunteer from the Mohonk Preserve, and costumed actors portraying Charles Darwin and his associate, Alfred Russell Wallace. Trail guides took visitors down each path, starting at the modern-day creature represented by each trail. Because this was the first preview of the USA version of the trail, only four of the original ten trails were walked: the hominin trail, the mammal trail, the amphibian and fish trail, and the dinosaur and bird trail. Guides stopped at various talking points to describe to visitors how far back in time they were, what creature in that line would have existed at the time, and some major differences in the way the world would have been back then.

This opening event was well-received, with visitors excited to have participated. The Ancestor’s Trail: USA endeavors to be as successful as the original UK trail. While the event this past April marked the beginning of the Ancestor’s Trail: USA, it by no means will be the end. The plan is to possibly make it an annual event, with updates and improvements every year. We are certainly hoping to make all ten trails accessible the next time the trail event opens, additionally, there is chatter about potentially designing a smartphone app, which will allow visitors to walk the trails whenever they want. The app will also include a database of information on a variety of relevant subjects like biology, anthropology, geography, and chemistry as they are related to our evolutionary past.



Putting together the event included several months of volunteer effort, a practice hike, costuming, and a series of Mohonk-New Paltz negotiations. We’d like to send special thanks to all our trail guides: Amanda Baroni, Julie Plankee, Jacqueline Di Santo, Cynthia Stewart, Kelsey Newhook, Alec Goldstein, Quincy Portman, Zoe Sand, Cheyenne Rinehart, Kerri-Lynn Dunne, and AnnMarie DeBonis, and volunteers, including our actors: Kazim Ayasbeyoglu, Kimberly Engley, and Miranda Cooper. Thank you to Andrea Varga for dressing us up and many thanks to our bagpiper, Alex Bartholomew. A massive thank you to Richard Dawkins for the generous donation, and many thanks to the Mohonk Preserve for allowing us to create this amazing event.

## Rebuilding Homes and Lives in Puerto Rico

Five New Paltz undergraduate Disaster Studies Minor students and two Masters in Mental Health Counseling students were among a group of 29 SUNY students who spent two weeks in Puerto Rico this July. Led by the Institute for Disaster Mental Health Director, Dr. Amy Nitza, the students spent grueling days repairing homes that were damaged by Hurricanes Irma and Maria in Fall 2017. The trip was a part of the New York Stands With Puerto Rico initiative, which has brought approximately 500 SUNY and CUNY students to the island to assist with ongoing recovery needs.

The group stayed in a dorm at the Universidad del Sagrado Corazón in San Juan, and took on arduous tasks like power washing and sealing damaged roofs in 90-degree weather. Because the students earned academic credit for participating, there was also homework: Each day they processed their experiences together with Dr. Nitza and IDMH graduate assistant Nathaniel Pickering, and they were required to submit a daily journal discussing their experience through a disaster psychology lens. They also were required to write an academic paper examining their experience, and the island's recovery, through the lens of disaster psychology.

While not all of the students spoke Spanish, they still found ways to communicate and bond with the homeowners and community members. One Disaster Studies student, Amena-Devine Ruffin, described the connection in a profile in the Poughkeepsie Journal: "The commonality we all had was food, music and dancing. All humans, it doesn't matter what language you speak, can relate to each other on these levels."

While the work was tiring, Dr. Nitza thought it was a great learning experience for all involved: "The students worked incredibly hard and pushed themselves to their limits both physically and mentally. At the same time, they got to see the direct impact of their work not only on the homes they were repairing, but on the people who owned those homes. This allowed them to see the connection between the practical and the psychological aspects of disaster recovery. It was an invaluable experience and one I hope we are able to offer to more students soon."



Students sealing a hurricane-damaged roof in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Drone photo by Peter Velz.



Students and Dr. Nitza take a break from work to greet Governor Andrew Cuomo, whose administration was involved in organizing the program.

### Faculty and Student Research Collaborations

One point of pride for the Psychology Department is how frequently professors and students collaborate on research, often resulting in publications and presentations at important conferences. Here are just a few examples of these collaborations from the past year.

Associate Professor Tabitha Holmes and Assistant Professor Karla Vermeulen both presented papers co-authored with SUNY New Paltz students at the Society for the Study of Emerging Adulthood conference in Washington, DC in November 2017. Dr. Holmes' paper, *"What if we had never broken up?": How emerging adults make meaning out of past relationships*, was written with graduate students Melissa Blankstein, Timea Tozser, and Brittany Mable. Melissa and Timea delivered the talk with help from undergrad student Katrina Scarimbolo. Timea and Dr. Holmes also presented a poster on Timea's thesis research, *"What if I had never been depressed?": Counterfactual thinking, stigma, and meaning-making in emerging adults who have experienced depression*. Dr. Vermeulen's paper, co-authored by graduate student Melissa Blankstein, was on *Election distress as motivator for political engagement among emerging adults* and addressed SUNY New Paltz students' reactions to the 2016 presidential election.

And, building on work done in collaboration with several psychology undergraduates (Kayla Sigmone, Leslie-Castro Tapia, Alexa Weiss, and Claurie Lindor), Associate Professors Melanie Hill and Tabitha Holmes presented at the Association of Women in Psychology Conference in Philadelphia in March 2018. *Gazed at, groped, and assaulted: The Too Much Information of being an adolescent girl* focused on the meaning making processes involved in TMI Project writing workshops, specifically those that led up to the performance of Our Bodies Talk Back in May, 2017.



Congratulations to the Spring 2018 undergraduate Students of Excellence: Egamaria Alacam, Jessica Bordon, Devon Brady, Antonio Cintron, Lina Greenspon, Mariah Griffin, Gordon Haskell, Eli Horowitz, Jennifer Lin, Danielle Longo, Gabriella Martinez, Michaela Mudaro, Kelsey Newhook, Alexa Sauro, Katrina Scarimbolo, Jessica Schrufer, Sarah Stoudt, and Maria Talloni-Perlett

#### From NP to Ph.D.

Congratulations to the following New Paltz students who have been accepted into Doctoral Programs!

- Egamaria Alacam – UCLA
- Andrew Perry – Ohio State University
- Morgan Gleason – DePaul University
- Rich Holler – Oakland University
- Olivia Jewell – Brunel University
- Vania Rolon – Brunel University



For details about this year's alumni reunion, go to <https://www.newpaltz.edu/reunion-2018/>

What are YOU up to? Please send your news to [geherg@newpaltz.edu](mailto:geherg@newpaltz.edu), [vermeulk@newpaltz.edu](mailto:vermeulk@newpaltz.edu), or [raskinj@newpaltz.edu](mailto:raskinj@newpaltz.edu) to be included in next year's newsletter.

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