Announcements

Three students working with Dr. Kana Taku earned research awards, congratulations all!

Velinka Marton was awarded a Provost Undergraduate Research Award for her independent study of Youth Perceptions of Intergenerational Discordance and Immigrant Well-being.

Jess Kopitz was awarded a Provost Graduate Research Award for her thesis study of Self-Reflection of Coping and Behavior Following Trauma Changing Negative Cognitive Patterns: Veteran Interventions.

Whitney Dominick was awarded a Provost Graduate Research Award for her dissertation study of Physical Touch, Empathy, and Conservation: Do Dolphin Interactions Impact Educational and Psychological Variables in Children?

Congratulations to Martha Escobar, who was interviewed about her STEM-education research for the current issue of APS Observer. Check it out!

Events

Feb 6: PSI CHI hosts Dave Hartman, OU alumni, who will speak about a summer job opportunity for Psychology students within HR with a focus on vocational evaluations of high school aged children. 5 to 6pm in Gold Room C of the OC.

Feb 13: Lunch Bunch with Dean Purcell. 12-1pm in 128-130 of the OC

Mar 1: Alvin Nicholas and Olivia Rothig will present their study, "Failure is in the eye of the beholder: Moderating effects of subjective failure experiences on psychological outcomes" at the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts, and Letters Annual Meeting, at Alma College, MI.

Recent Publications


The PSI CHI office is located in Pryale Hall

PSI CHI is the International Honors Society in Psychology at Oakland University. The purpose of PSI CHI is to encourage, stimulate, and maintain excellence in scholarship of the individual members in all fields, particularly in psychology and to advance the science of psychology.

PURPOSE

To encourage, stimulate, and maintain excellence in scholarship of the individual members in all fields, particularly in psychology, and to advance the science of psychology.

GOALS

To provide academic recognition to its inductees. Augment and enhance the regular curriculum.

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Genome Mapping

Oakland University researchers had a recent major breakthrough with a genome mapping study. Tara Oleksyk, Ph.D., assistant professor of biology, and Walter Wolfsberger, Ph.D. student in biological and biomedical sciences created genome mappings for three parrot species under threats: a Puerto Rican parrot, Cuban parrot, and Hispaniolan parrot.

This research combined the efforts of 16 researchers from various places, including: The United States, Puerto Rico, Russia, Ukraine, and Germany. The main focus was recovery efforts for these endangered bird species, which became endangered due to their habitats being destroyed. Their homes consisted of tree hallows, and a tree cannot be hollowed unless it is old.

Genome mapping aids in understanding proper recovery efforts, genetic diversity, and the probability of extinction. This specific study is helping save Amazon parrots through mapping their DNA and increasing proper conservation efforts.

“The natural history of life is written in genes. If we want to understand that history, we need to read it. Genome mapping allows us to do that.” ~Tara Oleksyk
Faculty Interviews

Todd K. Shackelford, Ph.D.

Distinguished Professor and Chair

While going to school, did you always want to pursue a career in psychology? Was psychology always your major?

**I knew when I was a senior in high school that I wanted to be a psychologist. I declared psychology my major in my first year of college.

What sparked your interest in general psychology? What about evolutionary psychology?

**My interest in psychology was sparked by a desire to understand why people hold religious beliefs and practice religion. I grew up in Tulsa, Oklahoma, which is very religious. I am not religious and never was, although most of my family was and still is. I did not learn about Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection until my first year of college. I read a few chapters from “On the origin of species” in a history of psychology course. Darwin’s theory made brutal sense to me, and immediately I soon learned about a new field called “evolutionary psychology,” which applied Darwin’s theory to human psychology. I knew then what I wanted to do!

What encouraged you to pursue a PhD rather than a PsyD?

**I realized in high school that I really enjoyed and did very well in academics. Plus, I wasn’t very good at much else! I decided in my first year of college that I would pursue a PhD in research psychology—specifically, in evolutionary psychology.

In your opinion, what has been your most interesting/favorite research study that you have conducted and/or helped conduct?

**I am most proud of a simple study we published in 2002 that showed that human males, like bird males and males of many other paternally investing species, are more interested in having sex with their long-term partner the greater the proportion of time the couple has spent apart since they last had sex (time during which she might have been unfaithful, placing her partner’s sperm into competition with sperm from a different male). Human males, in short, appear to have evolved psychological mechanisms to solve the adaptive problems
of female infidelity and sperm competition.

Do you have any words of advice for students on track for, or considering, a psychology degree?

**Make your education your top priority, and stay focused.**

What career do you think you would have/would want if it was not in psychology?

**I might have pursued a career in music, playing drums.**

If you had the chance to sit down and talk to any psychologist, past or present, who would it be and why?

**Charles Darwin, for sure. Darwin was a polymath, with an extraordinary range of interests and abilities, but he was certainly a gifted psychologist and I like to think he would have been thrilled with the emergence of evolutionary psychology.**
Melissa M. McDonald, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor

While going to school, did you always want to pursue a career in psychology? Was psychology always your major?

**I have been interested in psychology since I was in high school, but my focus has shifted a lot. Initially I imagined that I would become a clinician, but after some clinical coursework in college and an internship in addiction treatment, I realized that the field was not for me. Around the same time, I was volunteering as a research assistant in labs that studied social, evolutionary, and cultural psychology. I realized I had a passion for using research to answer big questions about the ultimate functions of human behavior. My experiences have shaped how I mentor undergraduate students who want to be clinicians; I can't stress how important it is to get some hands-on experience with both clinical work and research, so you can narrow down your pathways of interest. Psychology is a huge field but students aren't always aware of what other opportunities are available to them outside of clinical psychology.

In your opinion, what has been your most interesting/favorite research study that you have conducted and/or helped conduct?

**I really enjoy collaborating with colleagues who have different perspectives than my own. My favorite paper in that regard was a collaboration with my Israeli colleagues, including a graduate student who is a member of the very conservative Ultra-Orthodox community in Israel. We were able to integrate two fields that are typically viewed as mutually exclusive: social and evolutionary psychology. The combination provided a really unique analysis of the influence of sex roles on mating preferences in secular and religious communities in Israel.

What career do you think you would have/would want if it was not in psychology?

**I think I would really enjoy working in a medical field, perhaps as a physical therapist. I was a biology minor in college and loved that coursework. I even took a cadaver lab for an anatomy class just for fun. It's fascinating to understand the intricacies that keep our bodies functioning properly.
If you had the chance to sit down and talk to any psychologist, past or present, who would it be and why?

**Charles Darwin wasn't a psychologist, but he hinted at the merger of psychology and evolution in some of his writings. It would be really fun to talk with him about the modern approach to evolutionary psychology and get his perspective on the major developments in the field.

**Events**

February 5, 2019: Monthly Meeting in Conference Room Pryale Hall

February 6, 2019: Opportunity with Diverse Populations in Gold Room C

February 13, 2019: Lunch Bunch with Dr. Dean Purcell in Room 128-130 OC
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<th>POSITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Advisors</td>
<td>Dr. Cynthia Sifonis</td>
<td><a href="mailto:sifonis@oakland.edu">sifonis@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dr. Lakshmi Raman</td>
<td><a href="mailto:raman@oakland.edu">raman@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Emanuel Romero</td>
<td><a href="mailto:emanuelromero@oakland.edu">emanuelromero@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President</td>
<td>Megan Cash</td>
<td><a href="mailto:megancash@oakland.edu">megancash@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Brooklin Adams</td>
<td><a href="mailto:bmadams234@oakland.edu">bmadams234@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Ashley Harris</td>
<td><a href="mailto:amharris@oakland.edu">amharris@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Major Workshops</td>
<td>Urja Parikh</td>
<td><a href="mailto:uparikh@oakland.edu">uparikh@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Minor Workshops</td>
<td>Ray Noell</td>
<td><a href="mailto:renoell@oakland.edu">renoell@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Research Colloquia</td>
<td>Travis Achterhof</td>
<td><a href="mailto:tjachterhof@oakland.edu">tjachterhof@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Philanthropy</td>
<td>Rachel Lai</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rnlai@oakland.edu">rnlai@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Communications</td>
<td>Sarah Mayville</td>
<td><a href="mailto:samayville@oakland.edu">samayville@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Liaisons</td>
<td>Adam Conigliaro</td>
<td><a href="mailto:conigliaro@oakland.edu">conigliaro@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Publicity</td>
<td>Esther Lee</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elee3@oakland.edu">elee3@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officer of Web-management</td>
<td>AnneJoleen Elum</td>
<td><a href="mailto:elum@oakland.edu">elum@oakland.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PsychMatters Editor</td>
<td>Brooke Silverson</td>
<td><a href="mailto:basilverson@oakland.edu">basilverson@oakland.edu</a></td>
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