

CP Scene

Fall 2025

A Word From Melissa:

Welcome to the Fall Edition of the CP Scene!

I'm so excited to be back after my sabbatical last spring semester, and want to give a big thank you to Dr. Macias for doing an amazing job running the program, advising, and teaching while I was away.

It's important to mention that she did this all while being very pregnant, and we are happy to announce that her baby girl Evelyn ("Evie") was born in May. The entire family is doing well and now it's Dr. Macias' turn to have leave this fall semester. Welcome to the CP family Evie!

Thanks to Dr. Macias' stewardship, the program has not missed a beat and we welcomed a wonderful class of 18 new students this fall. In this edition, you will meet one of those students who is our new Graduate Assistant for the program, Maxwell. You will also meet a second-semester student Jana, as well as second-year student Janiza, who wisely suggests, "the more effort and engagement you invest, the more rewarding your experience will be."

We also hear from CP alumnus Audrianna, who is doing some amazing work in Ohio and has great advice for current students, as well as Dr. L'Heureux who teaches all our students in the (sometimes dreaded) Statistics course.

Finally, you will see that the CORE Lab was very busy at the end of the Spring semester and over the summer presenting at university and national conferences.

This is a difficult time politically and socially, and a time when community psychology might struggle to be recognized and supported, but we will continue to work and fight for individuals and communities. I can't wait to see how our students and alumni contribute to that movement!

As always...We Be CP!!!!



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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

JANIZA MOLINA

SECOND YEAR / CP CLUB PRESIDENT



Where did you grow up/where are you from?

I was born and raised in Greater New Haven, but later moved to Seymour.

What is your concentration?

Forensic Psychology

What are your future professional goals?

What sort of job would you like to have 5 years from now?

My future goals are to continue furthering my education and obtain my PsyD in Clinical Forensic Psychology. I hope to be working within prisons, providing mental health services to incarcerated individuals and their families. My goal is to support those transitioning out of the criminal justice system, particularly underserved and often overlooked populations, to ensure they have access to the care and resources needed for a healthier and more stable quality of life. I'm passionate about addressing the systemic barriers that contribute to recidivism and hope to play a role in promoting rehabilitation and reintegration through trauma-informed and community-based approaches.

Where did you complete your undergraduate degree? Did you have a major/minor outside of psychology?

I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Connecticut in 2024 with my Bachelor of Arts in Psychology.

What made you decide to pursue an MA in CP at UNH?

When I was initially applying to graduate programs, I came across the Community Psychology field somewhat unexpectedly, as I wasn't previously familiar with it. After doing my research, I was drawn to its focus on creating positive social change, working with diverse populations, and addressing systemic issues that deeply align with my interests and values. What ultimately led me to choose the University of New Haven was the structure and offerings of its Community Psychology program. The courses and overall approach stood out to me, particularly the emphasis on working with marginalized communities and applying psychology on a broader, systems-based level, including in forensic settings, which I was really interested in. I was especially interested in the program's focus on preventive and collaborative approaches working proactively through community engagement, early intervention, and capacity-building. It felt like the perfect fit for both my academic goals and long-term career aspirations.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

JANIZA MOLINA

SECOND YEAR / CP CLUB PRESIDENT

Where are you completing your internship? What are the main things you do there?

I am currently interning at Wheeler Clinic AIC Program. I take on a hands-on role in both client services and administrative support. I coordinate client intakes, assist with completing paperwork, and handle front desk responsibilities such as greeting clients, answering phones, and scheduling appointments. I support case management by helping with referral coordination, engaging with clients, and ensuring communication happens within required timeframes. I also assist with the JAMS client reporting program by making client calls, drafting and sending letters, and reporting updates to referral sources. In addition, I work with data systems to maintain accurate client records, generate reports, and support data analysis and quality assurance.

What aspect of the CP Program have you found to be the most beneficial/interesting?

The most interesting aspect of the Community Psychology program has been learning about the ways communities are shaped by both individual and systemic factors. I've found it particularly beneficial to explore how interventions can be tailored to address specific needs within communities, whether through promoting mental health, supporting social justice, or enhancing community well-being.

What is one thing you want people to know about you?

One thing I would want people to know is I'm proud to be a first-generation college graduate.

Three pieces of advice for first-year students

- You get out what you put in; the more effort and engagement you invest, the more rewarding your experience will be.
- Believe in yourself, even when others may not, because self-confidence and perseverance are key to overcoming challenges in life
- Do not hesitate to ask for help. There are many resources available both on and off campus, as well as fellow students and advisors who can offer guidance and share valuable firsthand experience whether academic, personal or professional.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

JANA ZHU

FIRST YEAR / SPRING START



Where did you grow up/where are you from?

I am from New York State. I grew up in Westchester County, in a small town called Ossining, 30 miles outside of the city.

Where did you complete your undergraduate degree? Did you have a major/minor outside of psychology?

I completed my undergraduate studies here at UNH. Initially, I was torn between marine biology and interior design, but neither worked out. I found the lab experience for marine biology was enjoyable, but my grades did not meet my expectations. I didn't enjoy the strict deadlines in interior design or being graded on my perfectionism. I ended up majoring in general psychology with a minor in sociology, drawn in by Abnormal Psychology and a captivating sociology professor. I think I speak for a lot of psych majors when I say that Abnormal Psychology is what drew me to decide on psych as my major. As for sociology, I loved my sociology professor; I found it super interesting, and Social Psychology was the deciding factor for me.

What made you decide to pursue an MA in CP at UNH?

As an undergraduate, I was familiar with the resources and faculty here, and I didn't want to start over elsewhere. My friends were here too. Initially, I was unsure about my future in psychology, caught between Clinical and Community pathways. In a Community Psychology class, I thought it wasn't for me since it sounded too much like social work. However, I later realized my interests blend both fields. I have a keen interest in diagnosing, a key aspect of Clinical Psychology, while also wanting to help students with disabilities. My goal is to provide accommodations and support to enhance their academic success, incorporating case management, psychoeducation, and educational advocacy. This approach allows me to combine my passion for diagnosis with a meaningful impact in both clinical and community settings.

What are your future professional goals? What sort of job would you like to have 5 years from now?

I'd like to work with students with disabilities, specifically learning/cognitive disabilities, but I can work with all types (physical and neurological). I would like to work as a case manager, psychoeducation, educational advocate, really whatever allows me to do something with the lines of those three options. I also want to work with elementary school students.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

JANA ZHU

FIRST YEAR / SPRING START

What aspect of the CP program have you found to be the most beneficial/interesting?

Being surrounded by so many great mentors. My professors, advisors, second-year CP students, and peers have all been such great mentors and examples of who I strive to be as a grad student and future professional. There is vibrant diversity in experience, knowledge, and field-related networks here. Everyone has something to teach you if you're willing and open to learning from others, both formally and informally

Where are you doing your internship, and what are the main things you do there?

I am interning at the Accessibility Resources Center as a Learning Assistant.

- Tutoring undergraduate students (Psychology & Sociology related)
- Helping students develop time management/organization skills
- Training students in using assistive technology through leading workshops
- Writing case notes for students that I meet with during Learning Assistant Appointments and workshops
- Participating in compiling a list of FAQ's for faculty at the University regarding the Accessibility Resources Center



What is one thing you want people to know about you?

I'd like for people to know that I am a dedicated and hard-working person and will always try to do the best that I can. I am also very self-aware of my own limitations so I know I can ask and seek resources to reach out to and help others as well.

How did you become interested in the Community Mental Health concentration?

It was the mix of community and clinical for me. I loved them so much and I can't part without either of them. Clinical is so specific to therapy and I don't want to be a therapist so Community with a Mental Health concentration is how I can be my most authentic self and do what feels true/right for me.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

MAXWELL SWIFT

FIRST YEAR / CP GRADUATE ASSISTANT



Where did you grow up/where are you from?

I am from Suffield Township, a small rural town in Northeast Ohio. Although I did spend quite a bit of my childhood in Washington Township, which is around Alliance, Ohio.

Where did you complete your undergraduate degree? Did you have a major/minor outside of psychology?

I completed my BA at DePaul University in Chicago. I double majored in Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) with a concentration in trans studies, along with Psychology with a concentration in human services. I also had a minor in LGBTQ+ studies.

What made you decide to pursue an MA in CP at UNH?

I needed an area that would allow me to marry the individual, scientific approach of general psychology with the highly theoretical, systemic approach of WGS. I had originally wanted to go into clinical, but grew frustrated at the lack of consideration of larger systems. I looked at social work, social psych, public health, and community psychology. Ultimately ended up applying to a majority of MPH programs and only two community psychology programs. In the end, I thought community psychology still considered the individual more than public health.

Don't ask me why UNH, I just looked at programs and it ended up on my list.

What are your future professional goals? What sort of job would you like to have 5 years from now?

I want to start my own non-profit that teaches a trans-inclusive sexual education curriculum that I will have developed. I know that's very ambitious so in the next five years I would at the very least like to be working to develop programs that benefit gender minorities in some aspect...or whatever the current administration will allow me to do.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

MAXWELL SWIFT

FIRST YEAR / CP GRADUATE ASSISTANT

How did you become interested in the Program Development concentration?

I was very grateful to work with a tiny non-profit in Chicago called Taking Back Our Lives. There I taught a 10-week teen dating violence prevention curriculum to freshmen in high school. My boss was an enormous influence on me during my time there. She had built our curriculum from the ground up, starting as a small after school program facilitated by herself and one other person. Through twenty years, she has a structured high school and middle school curriculum, and oversees teams in five Chicago Public Schools. I want to do what she is doing. She saw the deficits in intervention work so decided she would design her own prevention program. As a person who has pointed out various interventions issues surrounding trans issues, the only logical step is to go into prevention. And when there are so few programs that focus on gender minorities, I will just have to develop my own.

What advice would you give to undergraduate students thinking about applying to the CP Program?

Have an idea of what you want to do. Even as a first year, I know two years is going to go by very quickly. Knowing what you want to work on, having identifiable skills and areas of knowledge you want to develop will allow you to focus your attention better. And everything else you learn along the way is just an added bonus.

What is one thing you want people to know about you?

While I may be 21, my interests are not those of a 21-year-old. Some examples are: my favorite song is by Billy Joel, M*A*S*H is my favorite show, and I probably have no idea what celebrity you are talking about.

What do you do as the CP program's GA? When should students come to you?

As the GA, I do a lot of administrative tasks like creating the CP Scene (the newsletter you are currently reading), updating the program's and the CORE Lab website, taking minutes during the CORE Lab meetings, and managing the social media accounts. Additionally, I aid in various research projects led by Dr. Whitson and Dr. Macias. One of the major projects I assist with is the yearly alumni survey that provides insights into how the program can improve the program and provide current students with career trajectories after graduation.

You can come to me for:

- Issues in the program or areas of improvement
- Event ideas for the program
- CORE Lab issues or clarification

ALMUNI
SPOTLIGHT
CLASS OF 2016

AUDRIANNA
RODRIGUEZ, M.A

Where are you from? Where did you complete your undergraduate degree?

I'm from Cleveland, Ohio, and I have a bachelor's degree in psychology from Cleveland State University.

What was your concentration in the CP program?

Clinical (now Community Mental Health)

What inspired you to go to UNH and pursue a Master's in Community Psychology?

.What drew me to the University of New Haven was its Community Psychology program. I was particularly inspired by the program's emphasis on understanding individuals within their broader social, cultural, and community contexts rather than centering solely on individual solutions. I appreciate the department's admissions process, acknowledging the inequities associated with standardized testing and applying research-based understanding by not requiring the GRE.

Where did you do your internship?

New Haven Public School-Wilbur Cross High School. There, I helped high school seniors navigate the college admissions process by assisting with standardized test registration, scholarship applications, and academic support. As part of the Cross-SMART team, I identified at-risk students, monitored their progress, and connected them to necessary resources. Additionally, I researched interventions to reduce dropout rates and conducted student interviews to understand factors affecting academic persistence and engagement.



Looking back at your time at UNH, what aspects of the program did you find to be most valuable?

Reflecting on my academic experience, one transformative moment was Dr. Morris' lecture on the ecological systems model. An article about the Chicago Heat Wave, which described how the city's heat index turned into Dubai overnight. The piece powerfully illustrated how macro-level factors, such as policies, and micro-level conditions contributed to the devastating outcome of approximately 795 deaths. I was so intrigued that I presented on the Heat Wave for my Psychology and Opinion Change course. This project deepened my understanding of systems theory within my field, while my IO classmates contributed insights from an industrial-organizational perspective. This "ah-ha" moment continues to shape how I approach my work as a professional and how I strive to develop meaningful solutions to complex challenges.

ALMUNI SPOTLIGHT

CLASS OF 2016

AUDRIANNA RODRIGUEZ, M.A

Where are you currently working? What is a 'typical day' like for you?

I work in External Affairs at The Center for Community Solutions (CCS), a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing health, social services, and economic opportunity for all Ohioans. Based in Cleveland, CCS provides policymakers, service providers, and advocates with data-driven insights to build stronger, more equitable communities. The organization closely monitors federal, state, and county budgets, and translates complex policy and research into accessible public information. In my role, I collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders—including elected officials, community leaders, and service organizations—to bridge research, policy, and community impact.

Examples of my work include:

Habitat on the Hill aims to address critical home ownership barriers

Advocate voices and the power of participation in the state budget process

Additionally, I lead the Policy Ambassadors initiative, which builds civic engagement and empowers residents to learn policy within CCS 5 priority areas: Maternal & Infant Health, Medicaid, Older Adults, Poverty & Safety Net.

What are the most and least satisfying aspects of your position? What are the biggest challenges you face?

This is a very loaded question, and I am not sure that I can complete within the page limit. The current political climate is challenging.

Three pieces of advice for first-year students

- Paying attention to the topics, assignments, and 'ah-ha' moments that excite you as well as the task(s) that are pulling teeth. It's your inner higher self guiding you towards your specialized purpose.
- If you live for the applause, you'll die by the criticism
- Community Psychology & Chaos Theory. One of my favorite theories is chaos theory, also known as the butterfly effect, because it illustrates how every decision, action, or inaction can shape humanity—whether for better or for worse

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

DR. TARA L'HEUREUX

ASSITANT PROFESSOR

Where did you complete your undergraduate and graduate degrees?

I completed my BA in psychology at SUNY Plattsburgh. Then I went to UConn for my MA and PhD in Industrial & Organizational Psychology.

What drew you to the field of psychology? /What inspired you to pursue I/O Psychology

I have always been curious about humans! Psychology offered me an opportunity to learn more about myself and others on a very personal level. Learning was a natural outcome of a high level of interest. I was deeply interested in how human related to both individually and in groups (one of my key values is being helpful).

My mom might have influenced my interests as she was intellectually curious and was a voracious reader. She mainly read books about psychology and self-help books.

What do you like about teaching at the graduate level? What are the biggest challenges?

I like teaching foundations and translating practice. I also like the achievement-oriented graduate students. They have a tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity you don't find in undergraduate students.



Why did you decide to become a professor?

I love college campuses. And who doesn't want to work somewhere they love? For me, teaching felt like a way to be in college forever. I wanted to be able to read all the time.

My previous professors possibly inspired me as they all seemed to truly enjoy their positions, what they taught and their research. Additionally, I was a TA during my undergrad and graduate years for various areas of psychology so I already had previous experience. Overall, I like mentoring and think I have helpful things to teach the up-and-coming pros.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

DR. TARA L'HEUREUX

ASSITANT PROFESSOR



What classes are you teaching next semester?

PSYC 6626-01 Worker Well Being

Mini Term 1 Hyrbid (1/21 - 3/7)
Wednesdays 6:30 - 9:15 pm

PSYC 6640-01 Workplace Motivations and Attitudes

Mini Term 2 (3/16 - 5/2)
Wednesdays 6:30 - 9:15 pm

Have there been any notable differences in your students over the years?

The biggest change I have seen is a drop in natural curiosity and a rise in purely career advancement goals without diving in to the world of practice (professional meetings, etc.).

Are you involved in professional practices or research activities other than teaching?

I do research on my students, collecting data from them and evaluating my own courses along with the I/O psychology program. My research areas focuses around teamwork; understanding how conflict, prior group experience and personality traits impact teamwork.

What advice would you give to students about applying to a graduate psychology program?

Have a growth mindset. Want to build skills. Show initiative. Get used to reading all the time

Check out the program carefully , is it research-based or practice-based. Is there opportunity to be mentored?

What is one thing you want people to know about you?

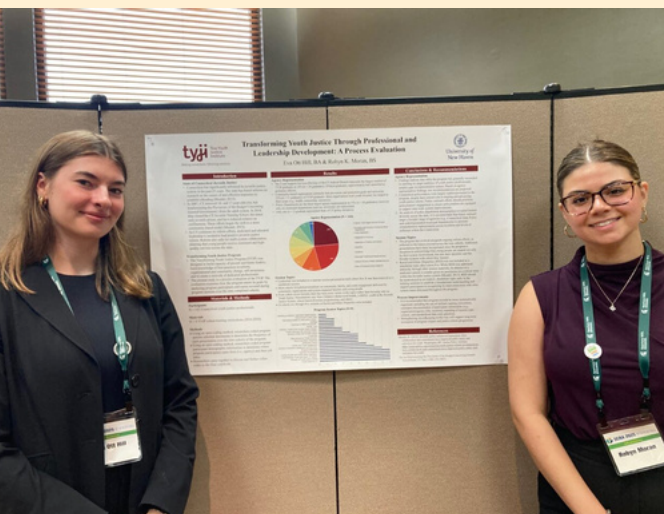
I love chubby small animals. Big cats or shih tzus; even through the worst of lowest times, a fluffy fury content little body purring (or snoring) on my lap syncs me to the present and gives me a bit of peace. They are after warmth and so am I.

RESEARCH CORNER



Contextual Protective Factors for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Potential Avenues for Intervention
Melissa L. Whitson, PhD & Robyn K. Moran, BS

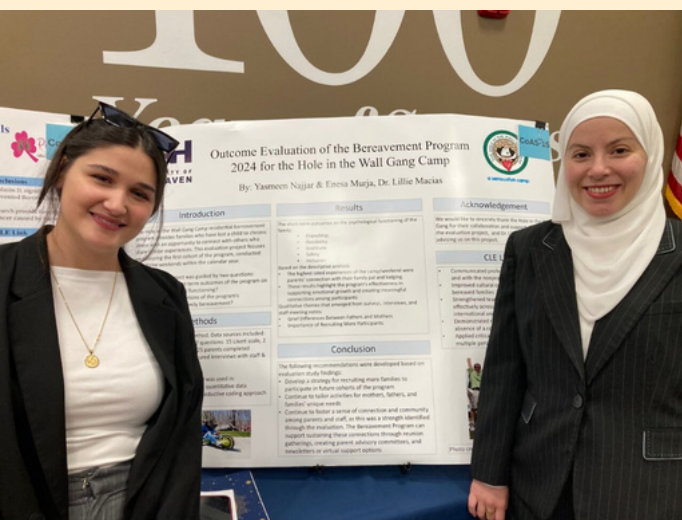
A Passion for Teaching Amidst COVID-19: University Faculty Well-Being Participatory Action Research
Robyn K. Moran, BS, Bethany Konel, BA, & Melissa L. Whitson, PhD



Transforming Youth Justice Through Professional and Leadership Development: A Process Evaluation
Eva Ott Hill, BA & Robyn K. Moran, BS

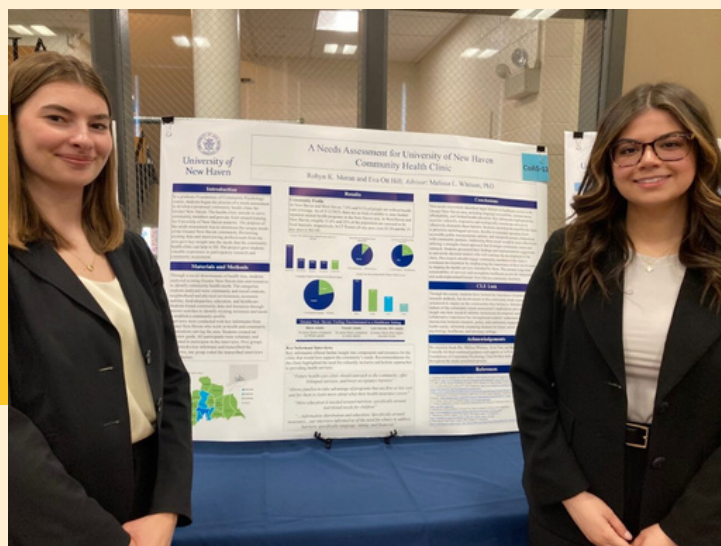
RESEARCH CORNER

UNH GRADUATE STUDENT SHOWCASE

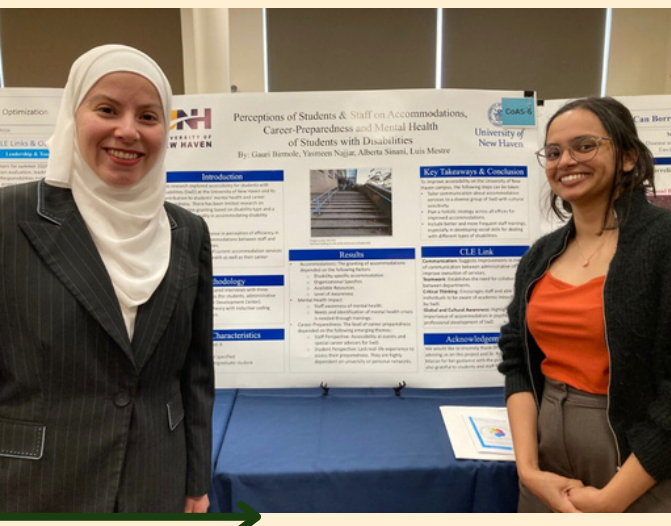


Outcome Evaluation of the Bereavement Program 2024 for the Hole in the Wall Gang Camp
Yasmeen Najjar & Enesa Murja, Dr. Lillie Macias

A Needs Assessment for University of New Haven Community Health Clinic
Robyn K. Moran & Eva Ott Hill; Melissa L. Whitson, PhD



Perceptions of Students & Staff on Accommodations, Career-Preparedness and Mental Health of Students with Disabilities
Gauri Birmole, Yasmeen Najjar, Alberta Sinani, & Luis Mestre



SCAN HERE
to check out our
CORE Lab



FALL MUSIC PLAYLIST



SWEATER WEATHER
THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

4:01



ALL TOO WELL (TAYLOR'S VERSION)
TAYLOR SWIFT

5:29



1979
SMASHING PUMPKINS

4:27



HIP TO BE SCARED (FEAT. JACOBY SHADDIX)
ICE NINE KILLS

3:24



SEPTEMBER
EARTH WIND AND FIRE

3:35



COLDER WEATHER
ZAC BROWN BAND

4:34

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**University of New Haven
Community Psychology
Program**