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Juliette Ratchford, '16, Builds on Skills Developed at Gardner-Webb to Study Virtue

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ALUMNI

Juliette Ratchford, '16, Builds on Skills Developed at Gardner-Webb to Study Virtue

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON FEBRUARY 1, 2021



Alumna is Co-Author of 11 Publications Focusing on How People Develop Their Strengths

As a student at Gardner-Webb University, Juliette Ratchford, '16, was introduced to the concept of positive psychology. Through this curriculum, GWU students learn how to help their future clients build on positive emotions, relationships, and virtues. Instead of serving as a counselor, though, Ratchford's interest is in conducting research and teaching.

"From Dr. (James) Morgan's classes, I became interested in positive psychology and psychology of religion and spirituality," Ratchford shared. "My main line of research to date has focused on the intersection of the two subdisciplines."



▲ In the spring of 2016, Juliette Ratchford presented her research, "Religiosity and Relationships: A Search for the Sacred with a Significant Other," at the Gardner-Webb University Life Of The Scholar (LOTS) event.

After receiving her Bachelor of Arts in psychology with a minor in classical languages from Gardner-Webb, Ratchford went to Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif., where she graduated in 2018 with a Master of Arts in psychology. While there, she worked in the Thrive Lab, which focused on understanding the dynamics of emerging adult identity formation in the context of faith communities.

When her mentor at Fuller was offered a job at Baylor University (Waco, Texas), she invited Ratchford to join her lab there. "I chose to attend Baylor, because of its focus on research rigor and its excellent social psychology PhD program," Ratchford affirmed.

As a member of Dr. Sarah Schnitker's Science of Virtues Laboratory at Baylor, Ratchford's main research interests lie in the intersection of personality, social, and positive psychology. She is specifically interested in developing contextually-valid, personality-based measures of virtue. Most of her work involves quantitative methodology.

"My research is focused on understanding virtue and how people develop their strengths and utilize them in their day-to-day life," Ratchford explained. "I consider what factors about a person, such as their personality, their religious views, and so on, increase or inhibit the development of certain strengths."



▲ Juliette Ratchford was chosen to read the scripture during her graduation ceremony on May 7, 2016.

Since 2019, she has co-authored [11 publications](#) on various topics, from religious transformation in adolescents to virtue development through sports participation. She believes the foundation she received at Gardner-Webb gave her the confidence to pursue her studies. "The professors at GWU encouraged and facilitated discussion, focusing on the development of critical thinking skills," she asserted. "Those skills have been essential in graduate school as I develop my own independent line of research."

Additionally, each of her Gardner-Webb professors contributed to her development as a researcher. "From Dr. (Iva) Naydenova's classes, I geared my research toward personality and understanding individual differences," Ratchford said. "I conducted my first research study in Dr. (Brooke) Thompson's Research Methods class, which first awakened me to interest in conducting research. Finally, Dr. (David) Carscaddon's capstone course pushed me to develop the ability to think critically about research, which has been essential in graduate school. His interest in philosophy has also affected my work, as I have sought interdisciplinary collaboration with philosophers."

Ratchford hopes to have a career that combines research and teaching. "My current program of study allows for close mentorship of undergraduate students, which I greatly enjoy," she shared. "I think I would like a career where I can be a professor and also conduct research. I would like to teach at an institution where I could mentor both undergraduate and graduate students as we conduct research together."

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.

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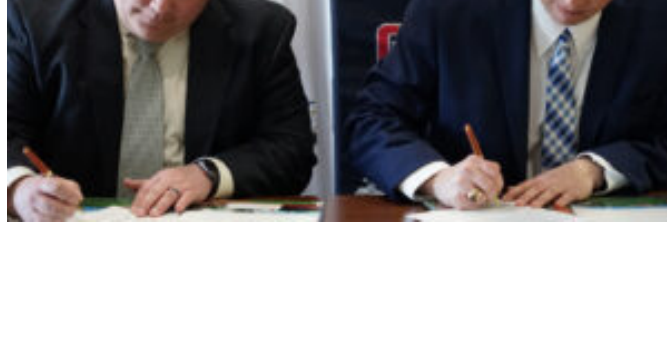


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