

Funded Research Project on Attitudes Towards Genetic Screening

Breast cancer is the most common non-skin cancer and the second leading cause of cancer death in women (ACS, 2007). Currently, it is estimated that 5 to 10% of breast cancers are inherited through genetic mutations (Easton, Ford, and Bishop, 1995). Patients with hereditary breast/ovarian cancer (HBOC) syndrome, most commonly indicated by BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutations, have an approximate 60–85% risk of breast cancer, an approximate 10%–40% risk of ovarian cancer (Antoniou et al., 2005), and a 50% chance of passing the gene mutation to their biological children. BRCA mutation testing has been available for more than a decade, with results used to help patients manage personal cancer risk through either intensive cancer screening or through prophylactic surgeries, such as prophylactic mastectomy and oophorectomy. Genetic and reproductive technologies, such as preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), are now also available for those patients who wish to avoid passing on cancer risk to their children. While these technologies have been available for some time to test for life-threatening conditions, such as cystic fibrosis, their use is more controversial for adult-onset conditions that are potentially preventable or treatable and that have incomplete penetrance, such as HBOC.

Dr. Lisa Rubin, assistant professor of Psychology at The New School, recently received a \$150,000 grant from the Ethical Legal Social Implications (ELSI) division of the NIH Human Genome Project to study attitudes regarding the use of both prenatal diagnosis and pre-implantation genetic diagnosis for inherited breast and ovarian cancer risk. This study, developed in collaboration with colleagues at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York City (Drs. Karen Hurley and Kenneth Offit) and Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, Israel (Dr. Michal Sagi), uses in-depth interviews with BRCA carriers of reproductive age, women

and men, to understand patients' perspectives regarding the personal, social, and ethical implications of these technologies and their views about whether and how they should be incorporated into genetic counseling practice.

"These technologies hold great promise for patients whose families, for generations, have been devastated by cancer," says Dr. Rubin. "However, they also raise important questions that will have expanding relevance as more genetic markers for adult onset health conditions are identified." In addition to weighing significant risks and benefits amidst great uncertainty regarding both cancer risk and risks specific to reproductive technologies, these technologies raise existential questions for prospective parents. Prenatal diagnosis, another reproductive technology explored in the study, raises additional concerns, including having to decide about pregnancy termination, and facing the possibility that a child could be born a known carrier of a BRCA gene mutation. Currently genetic testing guidelines suggest that individuals wait until age 18 for BRCA testing, when they can make a personal choice about whether or not to undergo genetic testing.

"There's a great deal of interest in this topic," says Dr. Rubin, "not only from patients, but from physicians and mental health practitioners working with patients who are currently facing these complex decisions. We're eager to be able to bring our findings to the field to inform clinical practice."

American Cancer Society (2007). *Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2007-2008*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, Inc.

Antoniou, A. C., Pharoah, P. D., Narod, S., Risch, H. A., Eyfjord, J. E., Hopper, J. L., et al. (2005). Breast and ovarian cancer risks to carriers of the BRCA1 5382insC and 185delAG and BRCA2 6174delT mutations: a combined analysis of 22 population based studies. *Journal of Medical Genetics*, 42(7), 602–603.

Easton, D.F., Ford, D., & Bishop, D.T. (1995). Breast and ovarian cancer incident in BRCA-1 mutation carriers. Breast cancer linkage consortium. *American Journal of Human Genetics*, 56, 265–271.

Psychology of Women and Gender Group Reinstated

Dr. Lisa Rubin and graduate student Michelle Leve have re-established the Psychology of Women and Gender Group. This group was previously an active part of The New School's community. The revamped group joins other active organizations within The New School for Social Research, such as People in Support of Women in Philosophy, in providing a space for feminist scholarship outside of the classroom. It is hoped that the Psychology of Women and Gender Group will also further a sense of community between graduate students in psychology by building upon shared academic interests.

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Notes from the Chair

I am pleased to have one more opportunity to update our alumni colleagues and friends on goings-on in our department. This is my final year as chair, with Mac Todman assuming this departmental leadership role in the coming academic year.

This has been an active and positive year for the Psychology department. We have settled into our new home on the sixth and seventh floors of 80 Fifth Avenue, and are finding that our new space works extremely well in meeting our various research and teaching needs. Each floor has excellent lab space, which is put to good use with the many empirical studies being undertaken in our department—much of it supported by external grants from the National Science Foundation and other funding sources. We are also making effective use of the student lounges on each floor, with the main student lounge on the seventh floor increasingly busy with informal gatherings, studying, and small-scale meetings of students and faculty across the department, and the sixth floor lounge kept

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Faculty News

JEREMY GINGES has recently published a number of papers, including “Religion and Popular Support for Suicide Attacks” in *Psychological Science*, and “Humiliation and the Inertia Effect” in the *Journal of Cognition and Culture*. In November he was awarded a three-year grant from the National Science Foundation to study the cultural and biological antecedents of sacred values and their effects on political and cultural conflict. This grant will allow him to continue his research program into sacred values, recently summarized in an op-ed article published by the *New York Times* “How Words Could End a War” (January 24, 2009).

MARCEL KINSBOURNE delivered the keynote address at the 23rd Annual Joseph R. Royce Research Conference of the Department of Psychology, University of Alberta at Edmonton and delivered two lectures in the University of Connecticut Clinical Research Talk Series.

NATHAN KOGAN published a paper entitled “Commentary: Divergent-Thinking Research and the Zeitgeist” in the *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts*. He also participated in a panel discussion at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association (Boston, 2008) entitled “Walking Backwards into the Future: Distinguished Scholars Reflect on Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts.”

ARIEN MACK and *Social Research* continue to be an active part of the New School community. In February Dr. Mack helped to organize a conference on academic freedom at the American Academy in Berlin to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the University in Exile and the founding of *Social Research*. The New School awarded an honorary degree to Chancellor Angela Merkel on February 19, before the conference. The conference and ceremony were attended by members of the board of trustees, New School for Social Research faculty, and New

School deans. The conference was supported by grants from the MacArthur Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

SHIREEN RIZVI, along with collaborating colleagues in Seattle and at Parsons, has received funding from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) to conduct research examining the feasibility of an innovative approach that will use a hand-held device to coach borderline personality disorder patients in the use of various dialectical behavior therapy skills.

The American Psychological Association has released a DVD titled “Psychoanalytic Therapy Over Time” (<http://www.apa.org/videos/4310864.html>) featuring **JEREMY SAFRAN**. The DVD is part of their “Psychotherapy in Six Sessions” video series. The Sandor Ferenczi Center at The New School for Social Research, which Dr. Safran co-chairs with Lewis Aron and Adrienne Harris, held its inaugural event on January 12, 2009. It featured a talk by Judit Meszaros, PhD, founding member of The Sandor Ferenczi Society in Budapest and introductory remarks by Adrienne Harris and Viktor Polgár, Ambassador and Consul General for The Republic of Hungary. Jeremy Safran delivered a series of lectures and workshops in Denmark and Stockholm in the spring of 2009.

MIRIAM and **HOWARD STEELE** were recently awarded a further grant from Einstein’s Institute for Clinical and Translational Research for their ongoing work with colleagues at Yeshiva University into intervention to prevent child maltreatment in a high risk population.

January 26, 2009, **MIRIAM STEELE** addressed a conference on child maltreatment of the University of San Diego’s Department of Psychiatry. Her title was “Assessment and Intervention with Traumatized Families: an Attachment-Based Toolbox.” February 20,

HOWARD STEELE addressed the Department of Psychiatry at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque. His title was “On the Origins of Reflective Functioning or ‘Mentalization’: Lessons for Clinical Work from Longitudinal Attachment Research.” February 21, Miriam Steele and Howard Steele presented their work at an all-day meeting of the New Mexico Psychoanalytic Association. They delivered three talks: (1) “Attachment Representation and Emotion Regulation: A 20 Year Longitudinal Study;” (2) “Changing Attachment Representations in Traumatized Children;” and (3) “Defining Therapeutic Action: Attachment-Based Intervention with High-Risk Families.”

Recent publications by the faculty in the Center for Attachment Research include:

H. Steele, M. Steele and C. Croft (2008). “Early Attachment Predicts Emotion Recognition at 6- and 11-Years Old.” *Attachment & Human Development*, 10, 379–393.

M. Steele, J. Hodges, J. Kaniuk, H. Steele et al (2009). “Attachment Representations and Adoption Outcome: On the Use of Narrative Assessments to Track the Adaptation of Previously Maltreated Children in their New Families.” In G.M. Wrobel, and E. Neil (Eds.) *International Advances in Adoption Research*. NY: Wiley.

Tell us what you’ve been up to!

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Alumni News

MELANIE ALBIN (MA, 1983) wrote and published a self help book, *Total Wellness: How to Live a Peaceful and Harmonious Life*.

MATTHEW PORTER (PHD, 2005) completed an NIH- funded postdoctoral fellowship in biobehavioral cancer research at Mount Sinai School of Medicine last year and was awarded a Templeton Fellowship for Postdoctoral Research in Spirituality and Health. Matthew has now begun the second year of that placement and has begun a program of highly structured qualitative research into varieties of existential/spiritual development among long-term survivors of HIV/AIDS.

Student News

JULIA BELOTSERKOVSKY has been awarded a beginning scholar grant from the American Psychoanalytic Association for the year 2009 for her dissertation research, to be completed under the mentorship of our department's Dr. Jeremy Safran and with the institutional support of Dr. Chris Muran and the Beth Israel Brief Psychotherapy Program. Julia also presented a poster at the American Psychoanalytic Association's winter 2009 meeting. The poster, entitled "Becoming a Psychoanalyst: Is There a Link Between the Analyst's Attachment Style to His or Her Training Analyst and His or Her Representations of Patient in Treatment?", was based on Julia's MA thesis, which she completed with the help of Dr. Safran.

BERNHARD LEIDNER received a Diversity Fund Graduate Travel Award from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology to attend the 2009 SPSP Conference. Travel awards are granted by the Society following a competitive selection process.

MICHELLE LEVE will be presenting her paper, "Post-Op Experiences of Elective Facial Cosmetic Surgery: A Feminist Interpretative Phenomological Analysis," written under the supervision of professor Lisa Rubin, at the International Society of Critical Health Psychology's conference in Lausanne, Switzerland, this upcoming July and the interdisciplinary conference *Cosmetic Cultures: Beauty, Globalization, Politics, Practices* in Leeds, UK, in June.

MARY CAROL MAZZA, along with professor **LISA RUBIN** and **ANDREA PUSIC**, attending surgeon at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, will be presenting her paper, "Expectations for Breast Reconstruction Among Women Undergoing Mastectomy Surgery" at the upcoming meeting of the Society for Behavioral Medicine in Montreal in April. Mary Carol's paper was selected by the SBM Program Committee as a "meritorious student abstract" and will be honored at the upcoming conference. Meritorious student abstracts include those posters and papers submitted by students and judged by the Program Committee "to contain research of the highest caliber."

JASON WHEELER's article, entitled "Three Varieties of Authority," appeared in the journal *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*.

Psychology of Women continued from p. 1

The Psychology of Women and Gender Group is a group comprised of both women and men within the graduate program of the Psychology department. Through guest speakers, film screenings, and members' presentations, the group supports the professional development of graduate students conducting research on women and gender.

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busy by faculty and students in the clinical area. In February, the NSSR Interdisciplinary Memory Group sponsored its Second Annual Memory Conference, which was organized by the Psychology department's faculty advisor Bill Hirst and graduate students Adam Brown and Alin Coman. The gathering brought together leading scholars in a productive three-day meeting titled "Memory and the Future." In March, *Social Research* sponsored a two-day conference on, "The Religious Secular Divide: The U.S. Case," as part of its annual conference series, co-directed by Arien Mack.

Within the department, we have had an excellent program in our bi-weekly speaker series. Talks to date have included "Does Trauma Transfer? The Case of Three Generations from the Holocaust" by Avi Sagi-Schwartz from the University of Haifa; "Emotional Development and Developmental Psychopathology" by Professor Michael Lewis from Rutgers University; "Resilience to Loss and Potential Trauma;" by George Bonanno, Teachers College Columbia University; "The Role of Thinking in Feeling: Insights from Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience" by Kevin Ochsner of Columbia University. To complete the speaker series this semester, we look forward to talks by Alex Todorov of Princeton University on "Evaluating Faces on Social Dimensions" and by Qi Wang of Cornell University on "Developing an Autobiographical Self in Cultural Contexts" in a session co-sponsored with the India-China Institute. The Cognitive, Social, and Developmental Psychology graduate program has also initiated a bi-weekly Brown Bag Series in which graduate students have an opportunity to present their work to faculty and students in the area.

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Topics in Diversity

Do you have research interests in psychological issues concerning gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or queer (GLBTQ) populations?

Are you looking for a way to increase your cultural competence?

Have you been looking for a community of queer-friendly students at The New School?

The GLBTQ Identity and Sexuality Journal Club was created to be a forum and safe space for students to discuss the current research literature, share research ideas, and engage with like-minded peers. Many students at The New School for Social Research have GLBTQ-oriented research interests, ranging from body image to cultural competency to transgender issues and intersecting social identities. Several graduate faculty members do their best to address the issues of students like us, and we are grateful to them for their continuing support. However, in the Psychology graduate program

there is no faculty member who focuses primarily on clinical issues related to GLBTQ identity and sexuality. We formed this group as a way to fill the gap for those students whose research interests and needs are not explicitly addressed by the current faculty and course curriculum.

At our last meeting, we discussed the article "Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People of Color: Understanding Culture Complexity and Managing Multiple Oppressions" (Fukuyama and Ferguson, 2000). The existing literature, as well as graduate education at The New School, does not give sufficient attention to issues of intersecting identities among racial and ethnic minority individuals. These gaps in research, practice, and education call for greater attention to the topic.

In our next meeting the topic will be self-objectification. We will be discussing two articles, "That Swimsuit Becomes You: Sex Differences in Self-Objectification, Restrained Eating, and Math Performance" (Fredrickson, Noll, Roberts, Quinn, and Twenge, 1998), as well as, "Those Speedos Become Them: The Role of Self-Objectification in Gay and Heterosexual Men's Body Image" (Martins, Tiggerman, and Kirkbride, 2007). These

articles are noteworthy because they show the empirical progress in addressing GLBTQ issues while highlighting remaining gaps in the literature.

The current research literature has not sufficiently addressed the diversity within the GLBTQ population. This leaves many clinicians ill-equipped to work effectively with members of these groups. Few resources are available to train clinicians to address the specific needs of the community. One notable exception is a program called Rainbow Heights that was featured in a previous issue of this newsletter and headed by an alumnus of this program. They offer workshops and training for clinicians in GLBTQ cultural competency.

Please join us at our biweekly meetings held Thursday nights from 6–7 p.m., in G529 of 80 Fifth Ave. The current article(s) of interest as well as room and time information are emailed the day before each meeting. If you would like a copy of the current article to be discussed and/or to be added to our listserv, please e-mail paull595@newschool.edu.

Magamet Borlakov and Laurie Paul, Journal Club Organizers