

TSS GROUP NEWS



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September News Highlights

Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.
TSS Group Director

We hope that this newsletter finds you easing into the fall months. The summer months were busy and exciting for the TSS Group. We were delighted (but selfishly a bit sad also!) to see **Drs. Ann Chu and Melody Combs** walk in graduation (check out their colorful regalia on page 2!). In late summer, we welcomed **Jane Sundermann** to our research group. Jane is a first-year graduate student in the Child Clinical and Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience programs. Look for more about Jane in our next newsletter.

We look forward to a busy fall in which we're continuing important research (see Victimization

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Director's Welcome: October News Highlights	1
Electronic Resource	1
Victimization History and PTSD	2
TSS Group Achievements	3
Building an Engaged Classroom	4

History and PTSD for preliminary findings from one of our projects on page 3) and beginning a new service-learning class with fantastic community partners (see page 4!).

As always, we look forward to finding ways to work with you. Thank you for all you do!

Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

Director, TSS Group
Associate Professor, University of Denver



Electronic Resources

Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

We are committed to helping you access research-related materials on trauma and violence. In each issue, we list research-related resources that are available **at no cost**. Please email adeprinc@du.edu if you are looking for research-related resources or have ideas for topics you'd like to see us cover here.

The **Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies** and **Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology** have launched a new website that includes public information about empirically-supported treatments for children and adolescents:

<http://www.abct.org/sccap/?m=sPublic&fa=sPublic>.

The **University of Oregon (UO) Department of Psychology** and the **UO Libraries** collaborated to create a new digital collection of medical and scientific literature in the field of dissociation and trauma. Dissociation and Trauma Archives contains the full text of many articles appearing in key journals published between 1862 and 1922. See <http://boundless.uoregon.edu/digcol/diss/index.php> to search and download (*for free*) articles and case studies from as early as 1862.

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** has several research-related resources available (http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/en/)

that cover topics such as estimating the economic cost of interpersonal violence; violence and health; and preventing violence. In addition, a “comprehensive injury prevention and control curriculum which has been developed through the efforts of WHO and a network of global injury prevention experts”, which is available at http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/capacitybuilding/teach_vip/en/.



Newly-hooded, Drs. Combs and Chu show off their DU colors while Anne sports University of Oregon green and yellow.

DU Graduation, August, 2009



Victimization History and PTSD Symptoms

Ryan Matlow (2nd year graduate student)

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has classically been defined according to three symptom subscales: 1.) intrusion (also called reexperiencing); 2.) avoidance (also called numbing); and 3.) hyper-arousal. In order to be diagnosed with PTSD, an individual must report at least one intrusive, three avoidance, and two hyper-arousal symptoms. However, new research points to alternative symptom structures for characterizing outcomes related to the experience of trauma (for review, see Palmieri, Weathers, Difede, & King, 2007). For example, one recent study found that individual differences in emotion processing style were associated with different patterns of PTSD symptom expression (Milanak & Berenbaum, 2009). This is an exciting new development that may lead to redefinition of the diagnostic criteria for PTSD.

In the TSS Group, we are particularly interested in how different experiences of violence may affect psychological outcomes because such knowledge can inform our intervention and prevention efforts. For example, previous research has shown that differences in how sexual assault victims define rape correspond to differences in PTSD symptom severity and ability to recognize risk (Layman et al., 1996; Marx & Soler-Baillo, 2005). These findings

have implications for intervention programs that focus on teaching women to detect and respond to potentially dangerous situations.

Building on such research, we distinguished between two forms of victimization in our study of women who were recently exposed to intimate partner violence. One form is repeated victimization at the hands of different perpetrators, which we called revictimization (RV). The second is repeated victimization at the hands of the same perpetrator (e.g., domestic violence by a partner), which we called chronic victimization (CV). Our question was: do these different types of victimization experiences correspond with different patterns of PTSD symptoms?

To answer our research question, we first summed the number of CV and RV experiences women reported in their lifetimes. Our results showed that, in terms of overall PTSD symptom severity (that is, total scores or scores on the three subscales), the number of RV and CV experiences did not predict symptoms.

However, when we looked at individual symptoms, we found that differences in victimization history

from *PTSD* page 2

did matter. More specifically, a greater frequency of RV incidents was associated with a particular form of avoidance that we think of as “passive avoidance” (for example, not being able to remember an important part of a traumatic event, or feeling emotionally numb). However, a greater frequency of CV incidents was associated with a different form avoidance which we think of as “active avoidance” (for example, trying not to think about, talk about, or have feelings about the traumatic event). This has led us to wonder if differences in forms of avoidance may be indicative of different psychological processes affecting the likelihood of experiencing RV or CV.

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While the current findings are preliminary, the implications of this research may inform intervention strategies. In particular, these findings point to the importance of considering the details

of an individual’s victimization history when trying to understand (and ultimately intervene related to) current distress.

Results from this research will be presented at the upcoming conference for the International Society of Traumatic Stress Studies in November, 2009. In addition, future research in our lab will more closely examine patterns of attentional processing in relation to victimization history and trauma-related symptom expression.

References:

- Layman, M. J., Gidycz, C. A., & Lynn, S. J. (1996). Unacknowledged versus acknowledged rape victims: situational factors and posttraumatic stress. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 105*, 124–131.
- Marx, B. P., & Soler-Baillo, J. M. (2005). The relationships among risk recognition, autonomic and self-reported arousal, and posttraumatic stress symptomatology in acknowledged and unacknowledged victims of sexual assault. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 67*, 618–624.
- Milanak, M. E. & Berenbaum, H. (2009). The Relationship between PTSD symptom factors and emotion. *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 22*, 139–145.
- Palmieri, P. A., Weathers, F. W., Difede, J., & King, D. W. (2007). Confirmatory factor analysis of the PTSD Checklist and the Clinician-Administered PTSD Scale in disaster workers exposed to the World Trade Center ground zero. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology, 116*, 329–341.



TSS Group Achievements

Several TSS Group publications are now available as pdf’s at <http://mysite.du.edu/~adeprinc/pub.html>, including publications co-authored with TSS Group members and graduates (**Ann Chu, Melody Combs, Kristin Weinzierl, Aimee Reichmann-Decker**) as well as colleagues from around the country.

Ryan Matlow will receive a Graduate Research Award from the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies at their Annual Meeting in November.



Did you know that you can access free copies of full-text articles describing our research?

Please visit

<http://mysite.du.edu/~adeprinc/pub.html>





Building an Engaged Classroom

Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

“Democratic engagement locates the university within an **ecosystem of knowledge production...**”

(Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009, p. 10).

Knowledge about domestic violence can be produced by many different people, in many different forms, for many different audiences: from a survivor who shares her unique story with a counselor; to an advocate who summarizes years of observations for new judges; to researchers who quantify the impact of domestic violence on the health care system in professional journals. Thus, research from the university is one of many sources of knowledge about domestic violence.

This quarter, I am teaching a first-year seminar entitled, “Science of Violence against Women”. With this course, I’ve had an opportunity to further develop an engaged classroom – that is, a classroom that builds on the strengths of partnerships between the university and community to meet learning goals. This particular course is designed to teach students about violence against women with an emphasis on how to access and evaluate knowledge generated in the research process. Instead of assignments that restrict knowledge to the classroom (think of turning a term paper in to a professor at the end of a course to only be read by that professor), students in this course will play an active part in the “ecosystem of knowledge production” through a **Community-engaged Research Project (CRP)**.

We are very fortunate to have several community partners for the CRP: Ending Violence against Women Project (EVAP); the Denver District Attorney’s Office; and the Social Change Committee of the Denver Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DDVCC). Our partners are helping students to learn about domestic violence from the perspective of professionals working on these issues in the Colorado community. In particular, **Margaret Abrams** hosted us for a day-long tour of the criminal justice system in



DU students spent a day with Margaret Abrams to learn more about domestic violence and the court system.

downtown Denver. Following our adventures downtown, **Linda Johnston** (EVAP) and **Dora Lee Larson** (Social Change Committee, DDVCC) shared their knowledge about domestic violence in Colorado during a class meeting.

After offering students knowledge from their vantage points in the “ecosystem”, our partners identified key questions about domestic violence that they confront in their work for which research knowledge may be useful. For example, research knowledge about memory for trauma may be useful to advocates trying to educate people about why women’s reports of domestic violence sometimes sound inconsistent.

From the university vantage point in the “ecosystem”, students are now learning how to find, evaluate, and describe high caliber research on violence against women. The students will apply what they learn in the classroom by finding research to address the questions posed by our partners. Students will make the research knowledge that they gain available to our partners through the creation of public products (including an Annotated Bibliography and PowerPoint Presentation). Our partners will then be able to use these public products in their work (e.g., in trainings with police, media, lawyers, judges, and the public).

We’re only a few weeks into the quarter, but student excitement is high! We look forward to reporting on how the CRPs develop in our engaged classroom. **Thank you to our partners for their collaboration!**

