

TSS GROUP NEWS



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October News Highlights

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

As the saying goes, it takes a village. This is especially true in both teaching and research this fall.

In the classroom, community partners are incredible co-educators, offering DU students unique opportunities to learn about violence and apply new knowledge. For example, my first-year seminar on the Science of Violence Against Women has come to life because of several dynamic partners. **Margaret Abrams** (District Attorney's Office) guided us through a tour of Denver's criminal justice system before classes started. From courtroom conversations with judges, attorneys, and victim advocates to lunch with **Detective Simpson** and **Sergeant Trujillo**, students had a glimpse of the complex criminal justice response to intimate partner abuse before stepping into the classroom. **Ginger Sherlock** (City Attorney's Office) visited the class to help us learn about the unique challenges that face victims of intimate partner abuse from marginalized groups. She challenged students to use what they learn about research on violence to identify high-quality research studies that can inform practice in Denver intimate abuse cases. Days later, **John Nelson** (Rape Assistance and Awareness Program) helped students learn about sexual assault, asking student to, in turn, help RAAP address key curriculum questions in their sexual violence prevention work. Upstairs in a graduate seminar on Research Design, students' education about the nuts and bolts of research is augmented thanks to several community partners. Students will apply what they are learning about design to research questions posed by **Adam Evans** (Project Pave), **Rebecca Gershten** and **Ali Vaughan Terry** (WINGS Foundation).

On the research side, we are grateful to those who have helped us get the word out about the **Denver Justice Project**, a small pilot study on trauma consequences facing women exposed to human sex trafficking (see flyer at end of newsletter). In addition, we are delighted to learn that we received funding from the National Institute of Justice for a study in partnership with the **Sexual Assault Interagency Council** (special thanks to **Michelle Spradling**, **Margaret Abrams**, **Karmen Carter**, and **Scott Snow**). Stay tuned for more on this project, which will focus on understanding more about how female sex assault victims access services as well as the impact of social reactions from people providing services on women's psychological well-being and criminal justice engagement.



Students learn from Margaret Abrams on a criminal justice tour.

Thank you for making all of this work possible!

Best regards,

Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

Director, TSS Group. Associate Professor, University of Denver

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Domestic Violence Public Service Ads: Do Graphic Imagines Work?

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Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Professional Psychology

Domestic violence is a serious public health concern, with over 22% of women reporting being physically assaulted by a domestic partner in their lifetimes (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Public service ads (PSAs) are an increasingly visible part of efforts to decrease the occurrence and consequences of domestic violence. Like other advertising, domestic violence PSAs are designed to grab attention, enhance memory for ad content, influence attitudes and behavior (e.g., encouraging engagement with service providers). Over the years, images in domestic violence PSAs have changed substantially; agencies have started using pictures that generate emotions – either vivid negative images (bruised faces or body parts), or positive images (smiling faces) that contrast with the negative text (Alfonso, Shaylor, & Brady, 2009).

The literature in psychology, mass media and communications, and advertising, however, show remarkably little outcome research specific to domestic violence public service campaigns. As a result, what constitutes an appropriate domestic violence PSA campaign is unclear, with campaign tactics changing seemingly arbitrarily throughout the years. We designed three studies to address this gap in existing research and attempted to answer the following questions: 1) what types of images in domestic violence PSAs result in enhanced memory for the ad and have the greatest impact on attitudes toward engagement?; 2) do emotional responses contribute to domestic violence PSA outcomes?; 3) do individual differences in trauma history or post-traumatic symptoms influence responses to domestic violence PSAs? Three types of matched domestic violence PSAs were created utilizing bruised face, bruised body part, and smiling face images, all women (these three types of images are common in existing campaigns). PSAs were displayed in lab and naturalistic settings, including a waiting room and college classrooms.

Working with undergraduates and community samples (recent survivors of domestic violence recruited through police reports), various methodologies were used across the three studies (N = 388) to understand the impact of different types of images in domestic violence PSAs on attitudes and memory for ad content, also considering affect and individual differences. Memory measures were selected to tap various types of memory. For attitudes, the following variables were measured: reported intent to call, donate or volunteer with the service provider associated with the PSA; persuasiveness of the PSA; and actual behavior (signing up to receive information from or volunteer with an on-campus organization). Emotional responses to PSAs were also measured in various ways, including psychophysiology, with affect investigated as a potential mediator in the relationship between PSA type and outcomes (i.e., do emotional responses explain why some ads are better remembered and rated as more persuasive than others?). For individual differences, interpersonal trauma history, specific domestic violence history, and current level of PTSD symptoms were considered as potential moderators (i.e., do persons with a history of exposure to traumatic stress or PTSD symptoms have a unique response to ads?).

What did we find?

Across three studies, with random assignment, using a variety of measures and different samples, in both active and passive viewing contexts (including with other ads competing for attention), a clear pattern emerged. Bruised face (and bruised body – Study 1) DV PSAs were associated with better memory (Studies 1 and 2), more favorable *attitudes* towards engagement with the agency associated with the ad (Studies 1, 2 and 3), actual agency engagement (Study 2), and higher persuasion ratings (Studies 2 and 3), than smiling face DV PSAs. Effect sizes were typically moderate to high.

Multiple outcome measures and different samples resulted in similar effects. This suggests those designing DV PSAs may want to consider that if the goal is to enhance memory, influence engagement with service providers, and create ads perceived as persuasive, ads utilizing graphic images of bruised face and bruised body parts appear to be more effective

PSAs, continued from page 2

than those with smiling face images. It is important to note use of other types of graphic images may not produce the same results.

Emotional responses to ads also differed based on image type, and in some cases, partially mediated the relationship between ads and outcomes. Ads with bruised face images were typically rated as more negative, evoked greater arousal, and were better remembered. In two studies trends emerged, such that interpersonal trauma history and PTSD symptoms were associated with memory outcomes, suggesting additional research is warranted.

This research provides information specifically relevant to the design of domestic violence public service campaigns and broadly relevant to understanding the role of emotional responses and individual differences in outcomes associated with various types of PSAs. In particular, Studies 2 and 3 provide a realistic, passive viewing context, measuring global memory for the ad and actual volunteer behavior, utilizing an experimental design (random assignment to condition in Study 3 and quarter-wise matched groups for Study 2). The use of multiple studies, with multiple measures, with two populations at risk for future domestic violence, in settings that mirror actual exposure contexts, underscores the applicability of this ecologically valid research to real world settings.

References

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Hot off the Presses!

We are pleased to announce several new publications:

DePrince, A.P., Belknap, J., Labus, J., Buckingham, S.E., & Gover, A.R. (2012). The impact of victim-focused outreach on criminal legal system outcomes following police-reported intimate partner abuse. *Violence against Women, 18*, 861–881. doi:10.1177/1077801212456523

DePrince, A.P. & Belknap, J. (2012). The impact of victim-focused outreach on criminal legal system outcomes following police-reported intimate partner abuse: Reply to commentaries. *Violence against Women, 18*, 906–912. doi:10.1177/1077801212456988

Belknap, J., Chu, A.T., & DePrince, A.P. (2012). The roles of phones and computers in threatening and abusing women victims of male intimate partner abuse. *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy, 19*, 373–406.

Babcock, R. & DePrince, A.P. (2012). Childhood betrayal trauma and self-blame appraisals among survivors of intimate partner abuse. *Journal of Trauma and Dissociation, 13*:5, 526–538. doi: 10.1080/15299732.2012.694842



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The Importance of Examining Links between Women's Perceptions of Police Response and Posttraumatic Distress after IPA

Tejas Srinivas

2nd Year Graduate Student

Approximately 5.3 million incidents of intimate partner abuse (IPA) are perpetrated against adult women annually in the United States (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003). Ecological theories of IPA suggest that a range of contextual and systemic factors impact women's outcomes following IPA (Carlson, 1984; Dutton, 1996; Messman-Moore & Long, 2003). Three main factors include personal resources (e.g., income, education, occupation, economic dependence on the perpetrator); social support (e.g., support of interpersonal others in providing friendship, emotional support, reinforcement of positive self-conceptions, and tangible aid); and institutional support (e.g., support of the criminal justice system, the mental health system, and social services).

A fairly substantial body of research documents the impact of personal resources and social support on IPA survivors' psychological outcomes. However, virtually no research explores the impact of institutional support on these outcomes. One main element of institutional support is police response to the IPA incident. For women whose experience of abuse is reported to law enforcement, interactions with the police typically constitute their first encounter with institutional systems in general, and with the criminal justice system in particular.

In the Traumatic Stress Studies Group, we are examining data from the Triage study with IPA survivors to explore the relationship between survivors' perceptions of the police response (i.e., dissatisfaction with police treatment and feelings of being treated with a lack of respect and dignity) and various psychological outcomes, including PTSD, depression, anxiety, dissociation, and posttraumatic appraisals (e.g., self-blame, anger). Women from diverse ethnic backgrounds living in Denver, CO were recruited based on having experienced a domestic violence incident reported to the police. Participants completed a range of measures to assess traditional ecological factors including personal resources and social support, as well as measures to assess perceptions of the police response (one component of institutional support) and posttraumatic distress symptoms and appraisals.

Exploring the relationship between IPA survivors' perceptions of the police response and posttraumatic distress symptoms and appraisals has the potential to make new and important contributions to the literature on ecological predictors of IPA outcomes. Greater understanding of this relationship may be especially critical due to the immense annual costs of medical and mental health care services for IPA survivors—approximately \$4.1 billion annually (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2003)—as well as the impact of psychological outcomes on other parts of survivors' lives, including decisions to report violence to law enforcement, engage with prosecution, and leave abusive relationships. Thus, identifying the relationship between IPA survivors' perceptions of the police response and their psychological outcomes could be crucial to evaluating and informing changes to institutional responses to IPA.

References

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- Carlson, B. E. (1984). Causes and maintenance of domestic violence: An ecological analysis. *The Social Service Review*, *58*(4), 569–587.
- Dutton, M. A. (1996). Battered women's strategic response to violence: The role of context. *Future Interventions with Battered Women and their Families*, *153*, 125.
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Meet our Newest TSS Group Member

*Please join us in welcoming **Kerry Gagnon** to the TSS Group. Kerry, a first year graduate student in the Child Clinical Psychology program, joined us this fall. We asked her a few questions to help you get to know her.*



Q: Tell us about yourself, please!

Kerry: Hi everyone! I am from the East Coast – born and raised in Connecticut. I went to the University of Connecticut for undergraduate (couldn't leave the state just yet), and then worked for Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island for my post-undergrad years. Throughout my undergrad and my professional years following, I dedicated both my studies and professional work to research in psychology. I found a passion for working with children and researching the etiology and course of psychological disorders, and in particular, researching the impact that traumatic experiences have on development and functioning. When I'm not focusing on research, I love to cook, listen to music, participate in outdoor activities, spend time with my family and friends, and play with cute pups.

Q: What are your current research interests?

Kerry: My current research interests broadly focus on the impact of trauma on development and treatment – how traumatic experiences impact functioning, development, and diagnosis. In addition, I am specifically interested in the risk factors and protective factors associated with revictimization and the development of psychopathology (e.g. Posttraumatic Stress Disorder).

Q: What drew you to the TSS group?

Kerry: The main thing that drew me to the TSS Group is the group's main focus on collaboration with the community. It is wonderful to be a part of a program that does both incredible research and has a strong dedication to bringing that research back to the community. I was also drawn to the diverse and influential research topics the group is pursuing – topics that align with my own research interests.

Beyond the research, I have to say that the TSS group is composed of an amazing bunch of people – a group that I truly look forward to working and growing with!

Q: What do you hope to accomplish in the TSS group?

Kerry: So many things. In summary, I hope to contribute to the many research goals of the group and give back to the community. I hope to further enhance research that focuses on the impact traumatic experiences have on a person's development, and find ways to prevent and/or counteract the consequences of these traumatic experiences. I hope to grow as a researcher, clinician, and person.



STUDENTS DUCK OUT OF THE COURT HOUSE AFTER
WATCHING CLOSING ARGUMENTS DURING OUR DAY
WITH MARGARET ABRAMS (SEE PAGE 1).



Denver Justice Project

University of Denver

Women (18 and older) who have been involved in domestic sex trafficking are invited to participate in *The Denver Justice Project*.

What is participating in the study like?

- You will be asked to take part in a *confidential* interview that may take up to 3 hours.
- Everything in the interview is *voluntary* – you are not required to answer any questions.
- You receive \$50.
- Snacks will be provided during the interview.

What are researchers trying to learn?

- We hope to learn what resources women need following trafficking as well as what kinds of experiences women have with the criminal justice system (such as police and prosecutors).

What about transportation?

- Cab fare to and from the interview or parking will be arranged for all participants.

Want more information?

- Confidential phone: 303.871.4103
- Confidential email: harp@du.edu.

This study is conducted by Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D. (Psychology Department, University of Denver). This research was reviewed and received approval by the University of Denver Institutional Review Board on April 5, 2012.