

TSS GROUP NEWS

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Fall News Highlights

By Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

With our last newsletter of 2007, we would like to thank you for making this year a success. We are grateful for partnerships and opportunities that have allowed for cross-fertilization of ideas and training.

I'd like to highlight a few newsworthy items. First, please join us in welcoming 2 new graduate students to our research group: Claire Hebenstreit and Courtney Mitchell. Our research group involves graduate students from the Psychology Department's Child Clinical, Social, and Cognitive programs. We are fortunate to have so many talented graduate students working on this research.

Second, we continue to recruit women to participate in a study on revictimization risk. **You can access flyers at <http://mysite.du.edu/~adeprinc/womencoping.pdf>** or email us at copingstudy@psy.du.edu to request that flyers be sent to you. Thank you for your ongoing help in getting the word out about this study!

Third, we hope you will enjoy reading about exciting new research findings and projects, including a National Institute of Justice award!

And most importantly, thank you for all of the work you do on behalf of victims and survivors. We look forward to finding ways to work with you!

Best regards,
Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.
Director, TSS Group
Assistant Professor, University of Denver

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------|---|
| Director's Welcome: Fall News Highlights | 1 |
| New Study Funded | 1 |
| A New Team Member | 2 |
| TSS Group Achievements | 2 |
| Does Learning Matter to Revictimization Risk? | 3 |
| Electronic Resource Updated | 4 |
| The ACT Campaign | 4 |

New Study Funded

By Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has funded the TSS Group and our research collaborators (Drs. **Joanne Belknap** and **Angela Gover**) to evaluate the effectiveness of the **Triage Outreach Project**.

Triage is an innovative interdisciplinary approach to making outreach to victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) as early as possible after cases come to the attention of the criminal justice system. Triage involves interdisciplinary team members from the **City and District Attorneys' Offices**, the **Denver Police Department** (including the **Victim Assistance Unit**), and several community-based agencies (**Denver Domestic Violence Coordinating**

Please see *New Study*, page 5

Women's Coping Study
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Why is this research being done?

- To learn more about how women cope with events such as child abuse, rape, domestic violence, or assaults on their own.
- Help other women to cope.
- Identify ways to decrease crime in the future, and
- Under better systems who have experienced stressful events.

Who can participate?

- Women ages 18-40 who have experienced something stressful, such as child abuse or assault.

What is involved?

- 3 training sessions at the University of Denver (located near Evans and University, accessible by bus routes 21 and 24):
 - Session 1 (about 2 hours): You receive \$25.
 - Session 2 (1.5-2 weeks later, about 2 hours): You receive \$25.
 - Session 3 (3 months later, takes 1 hour): You receive \$25.

What happens during the sessions?

You will be asked to do self-questionnaires. You will also be asked to do various games and tasks that measure things like attention and memory.

Please contact us if you would like to find out more or if you would like to participate!

Women's Coping Study
Telephone: 303-871-7407
Email: copingstudy@psy.du.edu

Developed in the UIC Psychology Department with the direction of Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

Did you know that flyers for our current studies are available at <http://www.du.edu/~adeprinc/study.html>?

A New TSS Group Team Member

Interview by Rheena Pineda, MA

In this interview, Rheena Pineda (3rd year graduate student) helps us get to know one of our new TSS Group members, 1st year graduate student, Claire Hebenstreit.

Q: Tell me a about yourself.

A: I came to DU from Boston, where I lived for the past 4 years. While I miss the subway, the ocean, and the ever-present rowdy Red Sox fans, I'm already loving the mountains and plentiful sunshine here in Denver! I'm a native of Northern Virginia, but I moved to New England to complete my undergrad degree in Sociology at Smith. After college, I made the transition to psychology while working for two years in the obesity medicine unit at Massachusetts General Hospital, where I worked closely with clinical psychologists for the first time. Because I knew that I wanted to work specifically in the area of trauma, I accepted a position as a research assistant at the National Center for PTSD at the Boston VA Medical Center, where I was able to pursue my interest in researching factors that influence the development and treatment of posttraumatic symptomatology in children and adolescents as well as civilian and veteran adults.

Q: What are your current research interests?

A: My current research interests are varied, and include cognition, trauma appraisal, the impact of trauma across the lifespan, resilience, and revictimization.

Q: What drew you to the TSS group?

After hearing Anne present on "The Ethics of Asking and Not Asking About Trauma" at the 2006 Conference on Innovations in Trauma Research Methods, I knew that I wanted to be part of the Traumatic Stress Studies lab here at DU.



*CLAIRE HEBENSTREIT
GRADUATE STUDENT*

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

I am delighted to be joining the group, and I feel lucky to be surrounded by such a wonderful, funny, and enthusiastic group of people! I am looking forward to collaborating with Anne and my fellow students on various lab projects, especially the Triage project, over the next few years.

TSS Group Achievements

In recognition of "outstanding dedication to public good scholarship on behalf of the University of Denver", **Anne DePrince** was named a Public Good Fellow by the University of Denver's Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning.

The DU website (www.du.edu) is currently featuring an article on TSS Group research, with comments from **Scott Snow** (Denver Police Department Victim Assistance Unit) and **Michelle Adams** (Victim Services Network, District Attorney's Office).





Does Learning Matter to Revictimization Risk?

By Rheena Pineda, M.A.
3rd year graduate student

Exposure to victimization early in life increases risk of later victimization. For example, women who are sexually and/or physically abused in childhood are more likely to be victimized as adults than their peers. Such findings have motivated researchers, including the TSS group, to investigate factors associated with risk for multiple victimizations.

During the academic year of 2006–2007, we examined whether individuals exposed to multiple victimizations may be at higher risk for disruptions in learning and memory. We hypothesized that disruptions in learning and memory might make it more difficult for people to create associations necessary for detecting and responding to threat. For example, Person A might learn that Situation X is associated with danger, remembering the threat the next time confronted with Situation X. If Person B does not learn or remember that association, she might be at increased risk the next time she encounters Situation X.

To begin to address these research questions, we examined learning and memory in undergraduate college students who reported no, single, or multiple–victimizations. We asked the participants to study word pairs. The words pairs included unrelated neutral words (i.e., mountain–letter); moderately associated neutral words (i.e., snore–sleep); and unrelated neutral and trauma related words (i.e., phrase–crime).

After studying the word pairs, participants were asked to recall the word pair (i.e., mountain–_____) and complete three–letter word stems

‘using the first word that comes to mind’ (i.e., let____ for letter). The first task (recalling the word pair) taps explicit memory, which is very sensitive to dysregulation of the hippocampus. The hippocampus is a brain region critical to memory function that has a very dense population of stress hormone receptors. The second task (completing the word stem) taps implicit memory. Implicit memories are different from explicit in that we can remember something implicitly without being able to verbalize (i.e., describe) that memory.

The group that reported multiple victimizations recalled fewer word pairs (explicit memory), but performed similarly on word stem completion (implicit memory), compared to the group that reported no victimization. These findings suggest that the multiply–victimized group had problems with the type of memory that depends on the hippocampus and is likely affected by prolonged exposure to stress. In future research, we are interested in testing whether frequent exposures to stressful experiences (e.g., multiple victimizations) are associated with general memory deficits because of the neurotoxic effects of chronic stress to specific regions of the brain, such as the hippocampus.

What does all this have to do with revictimization risk? These findings suggest that victimization...

Please see *Does Learning Matter*, page 5



ACCESS FULL–TEXT RESEARCH
ARTICLES FROM THE TSS GROUP
WEBSITE. VISIT US AT
<http://www.du.edu/~adeprinc>

Electronic Resource Spotlight

By Anne P. DePrince, Ph.D.

In this newsletter feature, we highlight updates to the **Denver Trauma Pages**, our electronic resource for Denver-area professionals working on issues related to trauma and violence (see <http://www.du.edu/psychology/traumapages/>).

I recently had the opportunity to do a “research training day” with professionals from the Children’s Advocacy Committee of the Colorado Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In that training, we talked about the importance of using reliable and valid measures when you incorporate assessment or research into your work. Inspired by that event and questions about how to find established measures, we have added links to the **Trauma Pages** for several websites that provide access to

established measures of trauma-related factors for both children and adults, including:

- Measuring Violence-Related Attitudes, Behaviors, and Influences Among Youths: A Compendium of Assessment Tools (CDC): <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/measure.htm>
- Measuring Intimate Partner Violence Victimization and Perpetration: A Compendium of Assessment Tools (Centers for Disease Control): http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/dvp/Compendium/Measuring_IPV_Victimization_and_Perpetration.htm
- Assessment Page (Florida State University Traumatology Institute): <http://mailer.fsu.edu/~cfigley/Tests/Tests.html>
- Searchable Inventory of Instruments Assessing Violent Behavior and Related Constructs in Children and Adolescents (The Violence Institute, UMDNJ): <http://vinst.umdj.edu/VAID/browse.asp>

Adults & Children Together (ACT) against Violence

By Lindsay Smart, MA

A potentially valuable resource for professionals working with children, adolescents, adults and families in the community is the Adults and Children Together Against Violence Program (ACT). ACT Against Violence is a violence prevention campaign that focuses on the adults who raise, care for, and teach children. The campaign grew out of the American Psychological Association’s (APA) Public Interest Directorate and their collaboration with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The intent of the collaboration was to disseminate violence prevention information to a broad cross-section of individuals who could play a role in violence education, such as professionals, public policy organizations, parents, teachers, social workers.

Based on research findings and knowledge of child development, the ACT program seeks to address risk factors for the development of aggression and violent behaviors in children. With the motto “Teach carefully,” the goal of the ACT program is to raise awareness about the influence of parent and adult behavior on the behaviors of young children. The campaign reminds parents, teachers, and other caregivers that children learn from what they see and hear, and that exposing children to violence and using violence to solve problems teaches children to do the same. Positive parenting, strengthening of families and community involvement are also emphasized as part of the campaign...

Please see *ACT Campaign*, page 5

Does Learning Matter from page 3

...history (none or multiple) relates to how well people make associations between two things. In this case, we used words and found that the multiply-victimized participants performed worse than their non-victimized peers. With this initial evidence, we can now work to extend these findings to other types of associations (beyond just word stimuli) that are relevant to revictimization

risk. Step by step, we will continue to make progress towards testing our over-arching hypothesis that problems in learning and memory generally may create problems in generalizing things from previous victimization experiences to later potentially-dangerous situations.

The paired word task was adapted from Golier et al. (2003), Keane, Gabrieli, Noland, and McNealy (1995), and Orr, Pitman, Lasko, and Herz (1993).



Photo by S. Buckingham

*THE 2007 TSS TEAM
ENJOYS THE FALL
WEATHER ON DU'S
CAMPUS.*

New Study from page 1

Council, Project Safeguard, SafeHouse Denver, and AMEND).

Margaret Abrams (Denver District Attorney's Office) spoke to the importance of this research. "In my role as Program Coordinator for domestic violence cases in the District Attorney's Office, I have witnessed first-hand the need for rigorous research to evaluate and inform our approaches to working with victims. Denver's domestic violence community has had a long-standing commitment to provide the best possible interventions to victims and batterers. However, we have not had the opportunity to test and evaluate the effectiveness and impact...I am eager to see this research come to fruition!"

We look forward to working with our partners to make this important project a success!

ACT Campaign from page 4

...The ACT campaign operates on several levels. On one level there is a media campaign involving public service announcements for television, radio, and print media. On another level, the program trains professionals to conduct eight-week training programs for families in the community known as Parents Raising Safe Kids. Currently the ACT program is being implemented in 35 communities in 18 states. The Parents Raising Safe Kids program has been utilized in child-care centers, prisons, shelters, hospitals, public libraries, adult education centers, churches, and schools.

The ACT campaign also provides a searchable database of relevant articles related to children, violence, and violence prevention (<http://forms.apa.org/act/litsearch/>).

To learn more, see <http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/> or call 1-877-ACT-WISE.



*A PUBLIC SERVICE AD
FROM THE "ACT
AGAINST VIOLENCE"
PREVENTION CAMPAIGN.*