

TC

# Today

Fall/Winter 2011

THE MAGAZINE OF TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



*Psychology is in the House*  
AND UNITING OUR WORK ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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With more than 40 faculty members at TC who are psychologists scattered across departments and disciplines, it is clear that *psychology is in the house* and bringing people together to help tackle some of society’s greatest challenges. Illustration by Michael Newhouse.

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## About this issue

IN PREPARING THIS SPECIAL ISSUE ON PSYCHOLOGY AT TEACHERS College, we chose to feature work about which—for the most part—we had not written before. We focused on faculty research rather than student programs. We left out some people whose work certainly qualifies as psychology but also reaches into other fields that we plan to feature in the near future. And, frankly, because we are human and TC is a busy place, there are people we simply didn't catch up with—for which, we offer our profuse apologies.

Accordingly, we hope you'll check out stories we previously published about the following people, centers and programs on the TC Web:

**JOHN BLACK**, Cleveland E. Dodge Professor of Telecommunications & Education, and Chair of TC's Department of Human Development. Black and many other faculty members at TC are translating knowledge about learning into technology that can enhance instruction and improve assessment of student performance. Their work will be featured in our spring 2012 issue, which will be devoted to education technology. Read about Black at <http://bit.ly/uPfos3>

**THE DEAN-HOPE CENTER** Dean-Hope offers the College's surrounding community services that range from couples counseling to educational testing and referral. The Center also provides TC doctoral and master's students in clinical psychology and school psychology the chance to do direct, supervised work with clients. Read our story on Dean-Hope at <http://bit.ly/vz9nPc>

**HERB GINSBURG**, Jacob Schiff Foundations Professor of Psychology and Education. He has been a leader in showing that young children have innate mathematical ability, and has collaborated with commercial software companies to develop assessment and teaching tools. See stories at <http://bit.ly/sPvutF> and <http://bit.ly/tLMufj> His work will also be featured this coming spring in our issue on technology.

**DEANNA KUHN**, Professor of Psychology and Education. She has developed a curriculum for promoting inquiry and argumentation skills in middle-school students, and is working with the government of the Dominican Republic to replicate her methods there. (<http://bit.ly/tftkLK>)

**LISA MILLER**, Professor of Psychology and Education. An expert on spirituality, Miller was profiled in the most recent issue of *TC Today* (<http://bit.ly/vxtFog>). Her recent article in the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, on the impact of religion or spirituality in the adult children of people suffering from major depression, appeared too late for us to review in this issue, but can be viewed at [ajp.psychiatryonline.org](http://ajp.psychiatryonline.org).

**PHILIP SAIGH**, Professor of Psychology and Education. He pioneered the development of post-traumatic stress disorder as a recognized psychological disorder in children, and has also helped shape PTSD treatments for patients of all ages. A story about his recent research in this area appears at <http://bit.ly/viSpyd>.

We also were not able to include stories on some prominent alumni. Stay tuned for future stories, including on TC Trustee and psychologist **DAILEY PATTEE**. THE EDITORS

# A TRADITION OF "SURE PROGRESS"

EDUCATION PSYCHOLOGY WAS BORN IN 1899, WHEN EDWARD LEE THORNDIKE, A young animal researcher who had studied with both James McKeen Cattell and William James, arrived at Teachers College as Instructor of Genetic Psychology. Thorndike had developed a new law of learning – the law of effect – which held that the consequence of a particular behavioral response influenced whether that response was likely to be repeated. At TC, he sought to empirically validate specific methods of teaching. He also founded *The Journal of Educational Psychology*, and authored the landmark three-volume *Educational Psychology* and *The Measurement of Intelligence*, which launched the field of educational testing.

TC's early education psychology faculty also included **Arthur Gates**, an expert on literacy in students with learning disabilities; **Naomi Norsworthy**, a pioneer in studying childhood mental deficiencies; **Percival Symonds**, a leading school psychologist; **Leta Stetter Hollingworth**, an expert on gifted children and gender differences in education; **Rudolf Pintner**, a leader in the fields of mental measurement and deaf education; and **Goodwin Watson**, founder of the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues.

At TC these leaders taught some of the major figures in American psychology, including:

**Carl Rogers**, one of the founders of the humanistic approach to psychology.

**Albert Ellis**, the founder of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, a more active, direct approach to treating psychological disorders than traditional psychoanalytic models, and a forerunner to Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy.

**Rollo May**, the author of *Love and Will* and *The Courage to Create*, who outlined a series of overlapping stages that people pass through en route to shedding their ego-centrism.

TC's seminal group of psychology faculty members was succeeded by another generation, equally brilliant, some of whom remain active today.

**Edmund Gordon**, TC's Richard March Hoe Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Education and the founder of the College's Institute for Urban and Minority Education, has been called "the premiere black psychologist of his generation" by the *New York Times*. He is best known for championing supplementary education – the formal and informal learning children receive through their families, personal relationships, and community groups and religious institutions.

**Morton Deutsch**, Professor Emeritus and founder of TC's International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution, is widely recognized as one of the fathers of the field of conflict resolution. His work has influenced deliberations at the United Nations and American arms negotiations.

Professor Emeritus **Leonard Blackman** has been a leader in describing the learning processes of individuals with mental retardation. He spearheaded the nation's first comprehensive Research and Demonstration Center for the Handicapped, winning grants that helped fund construction of TC's Thorndike Hall.

More than a century ago, E.L. Thorndike wrote that "testing the results of teaching and study is for the teacher what verification of theories is to the scientist—the sine qua non of sure progress." Much has changed in the field since then, but at Teachers College, that progress continues.

This piece was based substantially on a soon-to-be published monograph, "A History of Psychology at Columbia University: 1891-1970, by Robin L. Cautin, Professor and Psychology Department Chair at Manhattanville College, and Ludy T. Benjamin, Department Head, Professor of Psychology and Educational Psychology, and Presidential Professor of Teaching Excellence, Texas A&M University



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# CELEBRATING PSYCHOLOGY

*At* TEACHERS COLLEGE, WE believe that collaboration across the academic disciplines offers the best hope for solving the most challenging problems in education and human development. One of the most compelling stories of collaboration throughout our history has been the work of our faculty in psychology.

From its earliest days, when psychologist E.L. Thorndike pioneered the use of scientific methods to show how ideas imprint themselves in the brain, TC scholars and alumni have demonstrated that learning is a dynamic interplay of motivation, cognition, intellectual and emotional development, identity, physiology, environmental influences and many other factors.

Many of those branches of inquiry are represented at the College today by the more than 40 psychologists on the faculty who are deployed across more than a half-dozen programs.

Psychologists at your typical academic institution would be housed in a single department. But TC is anything but typical. Because their work takes them into so many aspects of learning, our psychology faculty end up collaborating with colleagues in nearly every program and department.

Take Herb Ginsburg, for example. He is a cognitive psychologist in our Department of Human Development. His partnership with outside companies to create software that helps young children learn math has been inspired by close observation of children and their teachers, generating deep understanding of the ways in which the human mind creates strategies for making sense of new material and solving problems.



Then there's Warner Burke, a social-organizational psychologist whose exploration of "learning agility" at long last could provide corporations and other organizations with an empirically-based means of selecting truly qualified leaders.

Derald Sue and Robert Carter are counseling psychologists who have brought the damage caused by racial discrimination, harassment and unintended microaggressions into the public eye, while also developing interventions and the basis for remedies in organizations, the medical profession and the legal system.

Another leading light is Marla Brassard, a school psychologist who has amassed a rich database on middle-school children who have been emotionally maltreated by parents or caregivers. She launched that project through her collaboration with colleagues in our Health and Behavioral Studies Department.

We have George Bonanno, a clinical psychologist whose research has overturned long-held assumptions about resilience after traumatic events. He is now working with Karen Froud, a psycholo-

gist and specialist in brain imaging in our Biobehavioral Studies department, to identify people at risk for suffering prolonged grief.

And then there is Jeanne Brooks-Gunn, a developmental psychologist who has conducted pioneering studies on poverty and learning. She has trained generations of students to approach research as an endeavor that requires the panoramic perspective of social scientists, economists, public health specialists and many other scholars.

The work of these scholars, along with that of many others on our faculty who were trained as psychologists, illustrates why Teachers College has been at the forefront of so many advances across so many fields. It also explains why such dedicated, thoughtful students choose to study and work here.

As Professor Froud puts it, "Working at TC has broadened my experience in a way that no other institution could. Only here would I have the opportunity to collaborate with so many different people and study such a range of phenomena and behaviors, and to think about it all in the framework of what's actually going on in society. It's a constant reminder that one day what we're doing could make a difference in how we treat a particular disorder or help people learn more easily, or enhance our understanding of other cultures."

This is a splendid statement of our mission at Teachers College! As a psychologist might say, making a difference makes us who we are.

Susan Fuhrman (Ph.D., '77)



## WHAT IT TAKES TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD

**R**AISING ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND ELIMINATING achievement gaps between advantaged and underprivileged students are America's preeminent goals. Current federal and state policies, however, largely ignore the fact that the childhood poverty rate in the United States, at 22 percent, is the highest in the industrialized world, and that poverty substantially impedes children's ability to succeed in school."

Thus reads the opening salvo of "Achievable and Affordable: Providing Comprehensive Educational Opportunity to Low-Income Students," a new report by TC's Campaign for Educational Equity that establishes a legal framework for providing the country's neediest children with both improved educational resources and other "wrap-around services"—including health care and after-school programs. The report details the cost of providing those services and projects the long-term return on such an investment.

In "Achievable and Affordable," Michael Rebell, Executive Director of the Campaign for Educational Equity, argues that the current federal No Child Left Behind legislation "implicitly establishes a statutory right to comprehensive educational

opportunity through its stated goal of providing fair, equal and substantial educational opportunities to all children and its mandate that all children be proficient in meeting challenging state standards by 2014."

The annual cost per child of public policies to narrow the achievement gap through comprehensive educational opportunity is estimated at \$11,800 per child in New York City and \$10,400 per child in New York State by co-authors Richard Rothstein, who is affiliated with both the Economic Policy Institute and the University of California (Berkeley) Law School, TC alumna Tamara Wilder Linkow, Senior Analyst with the public policy consulting firm Abt Associates, and Whitney Allgood, Chief of Staff for the News Literacy Project. They assume a full program of 18-and-a-half years, offered to children currently eligible for federally subsidized free and reduced-price lunches.

Based on estimates by co-authors Clive Belfield, Associate

To watch a stream of the October debate at Teachers College, visit <http://bit.ly/vCFY2a>

Professor of Economics at Queens College (CUNY) and Emma Garcia, Teaching Assistant in TC's Department of International and Transcultural Studies, those costs would total approximately \$4,750 more per child (in New York City) than what is now being spent for supports provided to underprivileged children.

Belfield, Henry Levin (TC's William Heard Kilpatrick Professor of Economics and Education) and Fiona Hollands (TC Adjunct Professor of Education) calculate significant long-term return on this investment through increased high school graduate rates. For example, the authors find that New York City and State combined spend \$82,000 on each high school dropout on healthcare, criminal justice, welfare and education, while receiving only \$45,000 in tax revenues. In contrast, for students earning a BA or high school degree, the city and state expenditures total \$55,000, while tax revenues are \$143,000.

To mark the release of "Achievable and Affordable," Rebell convened a group of leading policymakers at TC in early October to debate the report's recommendations. Moderated by TC President Susan Fuhrman, the group included TC alumnus John King, New York State Commissioner of Education and President of the University of the State of New York; Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers; Mary Anne Schmitt-Carey, President of Say Yes to Education, an organization that has provided comprehensive support to children in several major U.S. cities throughout their K-12 education and then funded their college tuition; and David Wakelyn, New York State Deputy Secretary for Education.

Read the full "Achievable and Affordable" report online at <http://bit.ly/tyeLLe>

## Fuhrman to Lead TC for a Second Term

SUSAN H. FUHRMAN HAS AGREED to stay on as President of Teachers College for a second term.

"We know that we picked a winner when we offered Susan the presidency five-and-a-half years ago, and we are very happy to stay with a winner," said William Rueckert, Co-Chair, with Jack Hyland, of the Teachers College



TC Board Co-Chair William Rueckert makes the announcement

Board of Trustees, in making the announcement.

Fuhrman, a TC alumna and the College's first female president, assumed her post in 2006. Under her leadership, TC has grown its enrollment to a modern-era high; nearly doubled financial aid dollars to students; opened a new public school in Harlem that anchors a larger consortium of Teachers College Partnership Schools; created partnerships around the world; and launched several new academic initiatives, including a new policy department, the nation's first master's degree program in Diabetes Education and Management, and the revitalization of TC's Institute for Urban and Minority Education.

## Goodwin Named Vice Dean

IN NOVEMBER, A. LIN GOODWIN assumed the newly created position

## TC Wins a \$1.25 Million Grant to Prepare Dually-Certified Teachers

As state and local school districts struggle to finance pre-K-12 budgets, very young children are in danger of being deprived of early education experiences. This is especially the case for young children with disabilities and English language learners from immigrant or low-income families. A new federal grant positions Teachers College to help address this problem, while also providing much-needed scholarship money to pre-service initial certification students who will be recruited from diverse backgrounds.

The five-year, \$1.25 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

will help TC prepare dually-certified teachers in both early childhood education and early childhood special education. Teachers will work with immigrant children and their families, said Mariana Souto-Manning, the grant's lead Principal Investigator. The co-principal investigators are Celia Genishi, Professor of Education in the Curriculum and Teaching Department; and Susan Recchia, Associate Professor in the Curriculum and Teaching Department.

The interdisciplinary TC program—called the Quality Universally Inclusive Early Responsive Education, or QUIERE Project—will expand an existing master's degree program leading to initial

dual certification in early childhood education and early childhood special education.

The TC grant is funded through the U.S. Education Department's \$11.5 million Personnel Development to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities Program.

More than 65 percent of the TC grant money will fund scholarships for 40 pre-service students. The grant is expected to benefit at least 40 additional students through improvements in placements and curriculum. The program will include collaboration with the New York City Department of Education and the New York State Department of Health, Bureau of Early Intervention.



A. Lin Goodwin

of Vice Dean of Teachers College.

The appointment to that post of Goodwin—who has served for the several years as the College’s Associate Dean of Teacher Education—is intended to “give leadership to a major renewal in teacher education,” said TC President Susan Fuhrman.

Goodwin is also Professor of Education at TC. As Associate Dean of Teacher Education, in 2009, she secured a \$9.75 million grant to fund the College’s new TR@TC urban teacher residency program.

## Writing the Book on School Health

THE JOURNAL OF SCHOOL Health devoted its October 2011 special issue to how and why specific health problems adversely affect academic achievement among the nation’s urban minority youth. All nine articles in the issue—which were funded by a grant from the MetLife Foundation—were authored by Charles Basch, TC’s Richard March Hoe Professor of Health and Education. Collectively titled “Healthier Students Are Better Learners,” the articles document seven health issues—vision, asthma, teen pregnancy, aggression and violence, physical activity, breakfast and inattention/hyperactivity—that disproportionately affect low-income, minority youth; detail how these problems contribute to the nation’s school

achievement gap; and outline a strategy for school health programs coordinated by an extensive cast of national, regional and local players.

## A Leader for TC’s New School

“I BELIEVE IN DISTRIBUTIVE leadership—I want everyone to have a voice in building their school community,” says Jeanene-Worrell-Breedon, Founding Principal of the new pre-K-8 Teachers College Community School, which opened this past September. Worrell-Breedon, a Penn State graduate who worked on Wall Street before switching careers to become a licensed K-12 reading specialist, is a Harlem resident and a 20-year veteran of the New York City school system. During her first two years as assistant principal in the South Bronx at PS 18 (the John Peter Zenger School), an institution where nearly 90 percent of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, and 25 percent live in homeless shelters, the percentage of students at the school who met state standards in reading rose by 11 percent, and in math by 22 percent—gains for which the principal publicly accorded Worrell-Breedon much of the credit.

York City’s Department of Education has been collaborating with Teachers College’s Inclusive Classrooms Project (TCICP), which supports research, teaching and service to create organizational structures and curricular opportunities for students of all abilities. Under the co-direction of faculty members Celia Oyler and Britt Hamre, TCICP has brought together teams of city teachers—often facilitated by TC faculty members—to create professional development for their colleagues across a range of areas. This past June, over 500 teachers, principals and paraprofessionals from city schools gathered at the College for a full-day of professional development workshops led by the teams.

## Liz Willen Directs Hechinger Institute

LIZ WILLEN HAS BEEN promoted to Director, TC’s Hechinger Institute on Education and the Media. She remains Editor of the Hechinger Report, the Institute’s independent, nonprofit education news service.

Willen served as Associate Director of the Institute and Associate Editor of the Hechinger Report beginning in 2006. She was named Interim Director last April, succeeding Richard Lee Colvin.

At *Bloomberg Markets* magazine in 2005, Willen and colleagues shared the George Polk Award for health reporting.

## Getting Inclusive

NEW YORK HAS LAGGED behind other states in meeting the needs of students with disabilities. But since February 2010, New



**STILL GOING STRONG** The College celebrated the life and work of emeritus professor Edmund W. Gordon (second from right), who turned 90 this past spring, and also established the Edmund W. Gordon Fellowship Fund for students working with the Institute for Urban and Minority Education, which Gordon founded. To learn about the Fund, email [egan@tc.edu](mailto:egan@tc.edu) or call (212) 678-3089.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSAN COOK





# BUILDING • • *Capacities*

**T**HE GREAT AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST (AND TEACHERS COLLEGE graduate) Carl Rogers wrote of “man’s tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities...to express and activate all the capacities of the organism.”

Many branches of psychology embrace this inherently optimistic view and have helped not only individuals but also informal groups and formal organizations to get better at, and derive greater fulfillment from what they do.

In this section we look at the work of TC faculty and alumni who are asking:

**What motivates people to learn?**

*The development of the mind and how the mind works in learning*

**What’s it all about?**

*Helping individuals, couples and non-professional groups search for meaning, success and—sometimes—happiness*

**Can we all go from good to great?**

*Issues of organizational effectiveness and culture*

Stephen Peverly has helped establish TC as a leader in school psychology.

His own research is advancing the field

by DAVID MCKAY WILSON

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS OPERATE BEHIND THE scenes, but they often make the difference, for students and faculty alike, between a bad day and a good one—and sometimes between a successful life and one gone awry. They craft interventions for kids who need help. They consult with parents and teachers to make sure that classroom strategies are reinforced at home, or that home conditions are taken into account in the classroom. They wrestle with issues of ethics and confidentiality. And they assess problems that run the gamut from reading difficulties to bullying to substance abuse to gang violence.

“The school psychologist’s day always fills up with surprises,” says Stephen Peverly. “We use whatever data about a student we can find—from assessments, classroom observation, conversations with parents and teachers—to determine if there is a problem, the causes of it and what the solution might be. It may not be straightforward to determine the cause, and sometimes figuring out how to fix it can be difficult too.”

Peverly, Professor of Psychology and Education and Chair of the Department of Health and Behavior Studies at Teachers College, has played a major role in strengthening TC’s school psychology program, which he directed from 1992 to 2010. The program now has two other world-class faculty members: Philip Saigh, who created the Children’s PTSD Inventory to assess those afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder and developed treatments for those with the condition; and Marla Brassard (see the story on page 50), who has focused global attention on the psychological maltreatment of children by teachers, parents and other caregivers.

Peverly’s own research focuses on two seemingly disparate areas: student note-taking and cross-cultural comparisons of factors that affect student performance in mathematics. In the latter work, his close collaborator is a former student, Zheng Zhou, who is now a professor at St. John’s University. The common thread, as in all work by school psychology researchers and practitioners, is “to do what we can to improve a child’s functioning within the context of the schools,” Peverly says.

In one strand of his cross-cultural work, he and Zhou have shown that Chinese children’s understanding of the concepts of time, speed and distance develops much more quickly than that of U.S. students.

Another of his studies explored the differences between East Asians and U.S. students in the study of math, a subject in which students from many Asian countries have consis-

tently outperformed their American counterparts on international exams. Teacher quality, Peverly discovered, could well be one part of the explanation. He tested third-grade teachers in New York City and Beijing on their knowledge of fractions, an important concept in third-grade math. (Quick: How much is one-sixth plus one-half?\*) The results stunned him. The Chinese teachers were straight-A students all the way, with an average score of 95 percent. The American instructors performed dismally, with third-grade teachers averaging just 33 percent in terms of subject mastery.

“Math and science are important subjects in East Asian countries, so I wasn’t surprised that the Chinese teachers were as good as they were,” Peverly says. “But I was startled at the difference between the American and the Chinese math teachers.”

But students need more than good teaching. To master material presented in class, they also need to be able to remember it, and that, Peverly has found, is where taking accurate, nuanced notes can make all the difference. Research with college students indicates that the quality of notes is one of the better predictors of test performance.

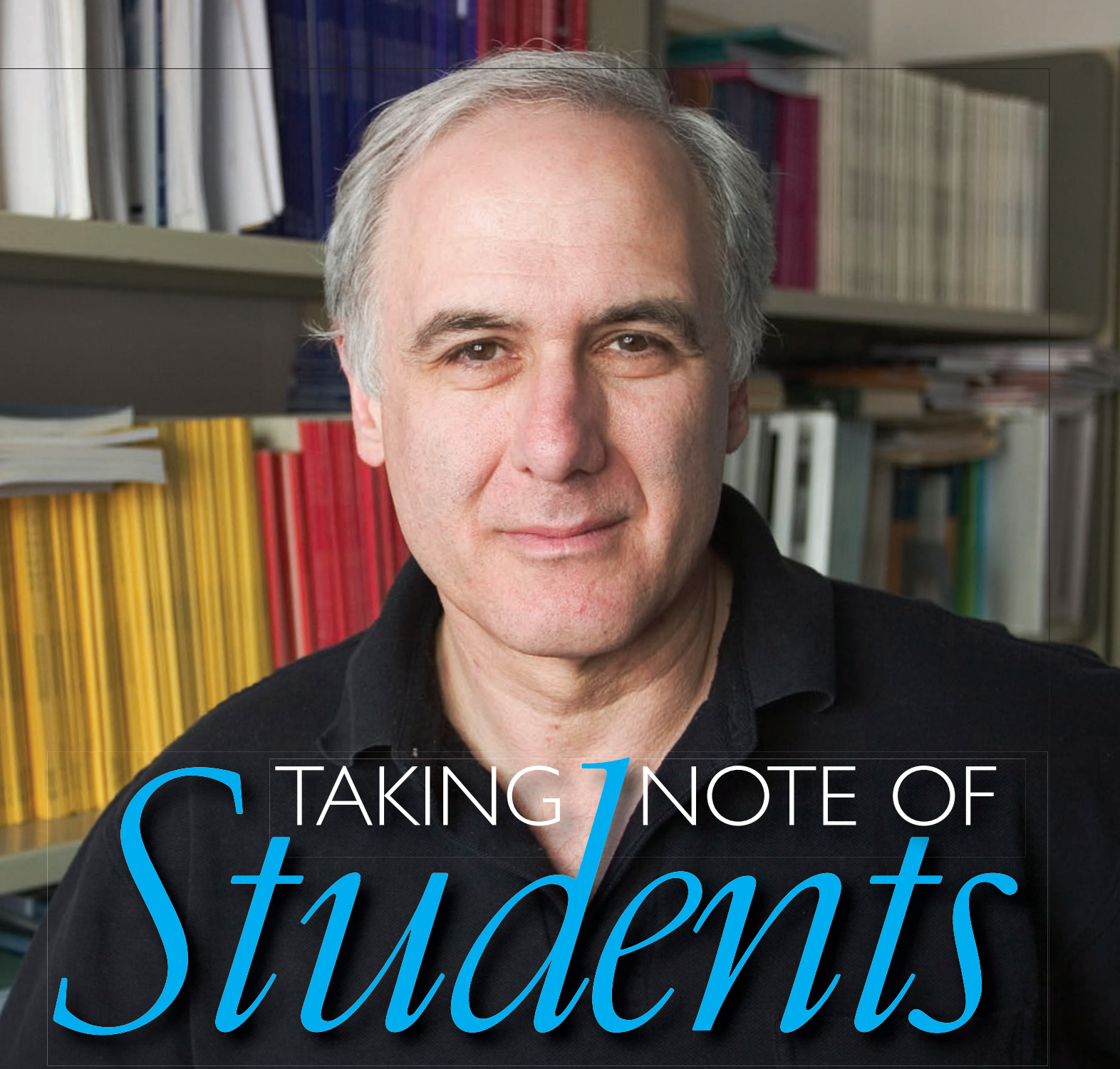
The importance of this research, he explains, “lies in determining the skills that underlie the ability of students to take good notes so that we can design interventions to help all students.” Good note-taking requires that the mind be engaged on several levels, “comprehending what’s important, maintaining your attention as you continue to comprehend, and writing down what you just understood while you’re still listening to comprehend more.”

In collaboration with what he calls “a cadre of excellent doctoral students,” Peverly has shown that writing speed, strong verbal skills and the ability to sustain attention over a long period all are essential to taking high-quality notes. Most of these findings come from studies of college students, but Peverly is now beginning to do research on the note-taking skills of younger students with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. His goal is to design instructional programs in note-taking that reinforce these skills, especially for struggling students in inner-city schools.

“Transcription speed is especially important,” he says. “And for kids in the first few years of school, how fast they write is one of the best predictors of the quality of essays they write in school.”

Yet too much speed can be counterproductive if it’s not accompanied by comprehension, a risk that may increase with note-taking on computers. Peverly and his collaborators are now designing a study that will focus on that particular question.

“With typing, you can go fast, but you have to make sure you pay attention enough to determine what’s important about what you are hearing,” he says. “Good note-taking isn’t simply about trying to take down all the information. It’s also a filtering process, a way of zeroing in on what’s most important.”



# TAKING NOTE OF *Students*

Reading issues, too, can interfere with effective note-taking, making it all the more important, Peverly says, for school psychologists to have a strong foundation in reading theory. “Most of the students in special education have learning difficulties, and a significant number have reading problems. If a school psychologist doesn’t know about reading, there will be substantial numbers of students they will be unable to help.”

Peverly says most educators have a good handle on reading difficulties and can choose from an extensive array of

techniques in their instructional quiver to address such problems. Nevertheless, the challenges become steeper with students who also have socio-emotional issues. In particular, intervening in problem situations “can play out differently, depending on how old the child is,” says Peverly. “It gets much more complicated with kids who grow up in the inner city, with fewer services and more difficult environments, with higher rates of violence and chronic disease, like asthma. And these problems can be involved in any aspect of a student’s life in schools.”

TC



# TALK *to* ME

Rumors of psychotherapy's demise continue to be greatly exaggerated, says Barry Farber. As Woody Allen might argue: We need the eggs

*by* EMILY ROSENBAUM



**P**SYCHOANALYTICALLY ORIENTED PSYCHOTHERAPY, more commonly known as “talk therapy,” has existed in the formal sense for only a little more than a century. But in that time it has faced some stiff challenges, including pharmacological treatments, cognitive behavioral therapy, managed-care restrictions and rebellion against the therapist’s authority and neutrality. And now, in the age of Facebook, Twitter and ever-shorter attention spans, comes a challenge from communications technology, too.

For Barry Farber, Professor of Psychology and Education, a central factor in how the practice has responded—and, ultimately, a major reason why it has survived—has to do with disclosure.

“Even in psychotherapy there’s this dialectic between, on the one hand, wanting to confess and let the therapist know everything, and on the other, avoiding shame,” says Farber, the author of *Self-Disclosure in Psychotherapy* (Guilford, 2006). “Most people struggle to tell their therapist everything, even though they say they want to.” Understanding the gap between what patients want to share and what they actually share can help therapists strengthen the therapeutic relationship. Farber has also examined the flip side: what therapists tell their patients about themselves.

Psychoanalytically oriented or psychodynamic therapy is what most people think of when they talk about “traditional” therapy, in which the patient works through his or her issues by talking with a therapist. Through the 1960s, this form of therapy held what Farber terms a “near monopoly,” but that changed in the 1970s with the rise of cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), which targets specific behaviors and aims for concrete outcomes. The “why” of a person’s problematic behavior is less central in CBT, except in the more immediate sense of focusing on motivations that can be blunted or used as incentives. The patient spends less time unburdening and more time simply trying to modify behavior. In the 1970s and 1980s, CBT “seemed to turn on a firmer foundation,” says Farber. “The American Psychological Association was pushing clinical psychology to rest on a more scientific basis, and Ph.D. programs were moving toward a greater emphasis on science than on practice.”

Then, too, Farber says, in the 1980s and 1990s, CBT became very attractive to insurance companies and HMOs, which wanted faster, cheaper fixes and were “very unhappy about the long-term, almost interminable length of time that analytically oriented therapies were taking.” The insurers also wanted “greater specification of technique, aims, problem formation and results.”

Hence the concomitant rise of medication, beginning with drugs such as Miltown and continuing with the subsequent introduction of more sophisticated treatments such as Prozac, which modify the uptake of serotonin, dopamine and other brain chemicals. Medications have now

been approved for a host of newly identified anxiety- and depression-related disorders, as well as for more serious psychotic illnesses, and constitute a booming business.

Yet, as Farber points out, medication works in only about two-thirds of patients and often has serious side effects. Perhaps even more to the point, both medication and CBT lack the critical component of disclosure.

“While CBT is still by far the prevailing modality, psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapies are far from dead and in fact are making a nice comeback,” Farber says. “People do not want just symptom relief from their psychotherapy. There are a fair number of people who want meaning in their lives, who are looking for their therapy to answer some existential questions or some interpersonal questions. It’s not about symptom relief to ask, ‘How can I get a greater sense of self?’ or ‘How can I get along better with the important people in my life?’”

True, existential questions are not quantifiable, and insurance companies don’t have a treatment code for them. But Farber points out that psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapy, too, has a basis in science. There have been a number of articles asserting the efficacy of psychodynamic therapy. Farber points to a 2010 review of research in *The American Psychologist* by Jonathan Shedler, “The Efficacy of Psychodynamic Psychotherapy,” which finds that psychodynamic therapy has longer-lasting results than therapy aimed only at changing behavior, possibly because psychodynamic therapy helps build “inner capacities” that strengthen a patient beyond symptom relief.

“The assumption that cognitive behavioral therapy should be the preferred modality because it’s more effective turns out to be untrue,” Farber says. “If you reanalyze the data, there’s no reason for psychoanalytically oriented psychotherapists to take a backseat or be ashamed of the scientific results.”

In addition, psychoanalytic therapy has evolved, taking “a more relational turn” during the past 30 years, explains Farber. It’s not about epiphany or a one-sided disclosure, but rather about a relationship between therapist and patient. “People now talk about ‘contemporary relational dynamic psychotherapy,’ in which the relationship with the therapist provides the template for how one looks at other relationships in life, and there’s far more interaction between the patient and his or her therapist.” Within this relationship, patients and therapists together do the work of making meaning.

That sense of connection may be all the more important in the current economic climate, Farber says. “Not having a job is first and foremost an economic problem, but it has psychological consequences. It impairs people’s sense of self.” Of course, paying for psychoanalytic therapy can be tough for those without health insurance, as well as for people whose managed-care providers will cover only a few dozen therapeutic sessions. But many therapists will

“...therapists are beyond even the *most intimate, loving* friends. The therapist provides an interpersonal opportunity to *rework the narrative*, to tell the details of the story, but ultimately in a different way.”



continue therapy at greatly reduced rates when the insurer stops covering treatment. For patients without coverage, there are sliding-scale clinics and student-run facilities, such as those at the analytic institutes and many colleges and universities, including Teachers College.

Now, though, psychotherapy is facing a new challenge. Do people still seek long-term analytical relationships in the age of Facebook? The psychoanalytic “hour” has already been chopped to 50 or even 45 minutes. So is there a place for talk therapy at a time when all a person needs is a Word-Press account to unburden herself of her deepest secrets?

Absolutely, says Farber, whose most recent research delves into how young adults are using social media to disclose and ways such disclosure affects and is affected by the therapeutic relationship.

Sharing via social media has become an almost continuous process in so many people’s lives, but as Farber’s research finds, the process of disclosure in blogging and tweeting just doesn’t have the same effect as it does in psychodynamic therapy. Certainly there are benefits to using technology to discuss troubling aspects of one’s life. For example, many adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse find support in an online community. “It does have the elements of a group therapy experience, of people providing some sense that what you’re feeling makes sense, what you’re feeling is normative, and perhaps most important, it wasn’t your fault.”

However, this online experience is very different from having an effective therapeutic relationship.

“There’s a cathartic effect with online disclosure in relieving yourself of the burden of something that you want to get off your chest,” Farber explains. But “after the moment’s relief, it leaves you feeling raw and thinking, ‘*Now* what do I do with this stuff?’ which is where the real therapist is better than tweeting or putting it out in the blogosphere.”

Shame may be even more of an issue for a person who unburdens via social media. At least in face-to-face talk therapy, “the therapist and you now have an opportunity of speaking through your shame and wondering where it came from and how it manifests in other situations,” Farber says. “It can be a learning moment. That kind of reparative work is very unlikely to happen through social media. You’re stuck with the shame.”

Certainly it is easier and cheaper to tweet every time one feels down. But Farber believes that, as preceding generations have discovered, there is no substitute for talking about issues with someone who’s expert in the process.

“I believe in therapy,” he says. “I believe therapists are beyond even the most intimate, loving friends. The therapist provides an interpersonal opportunity to rework the narrative, to tell the details of the story, but ultimately in a different way.” This is something you just can’t do in 140 characters.

TC

# ANALYZING THE *Webs We Weave*

James Westaby views individual and organizational performance as the product of the conflicting motivations within network structures

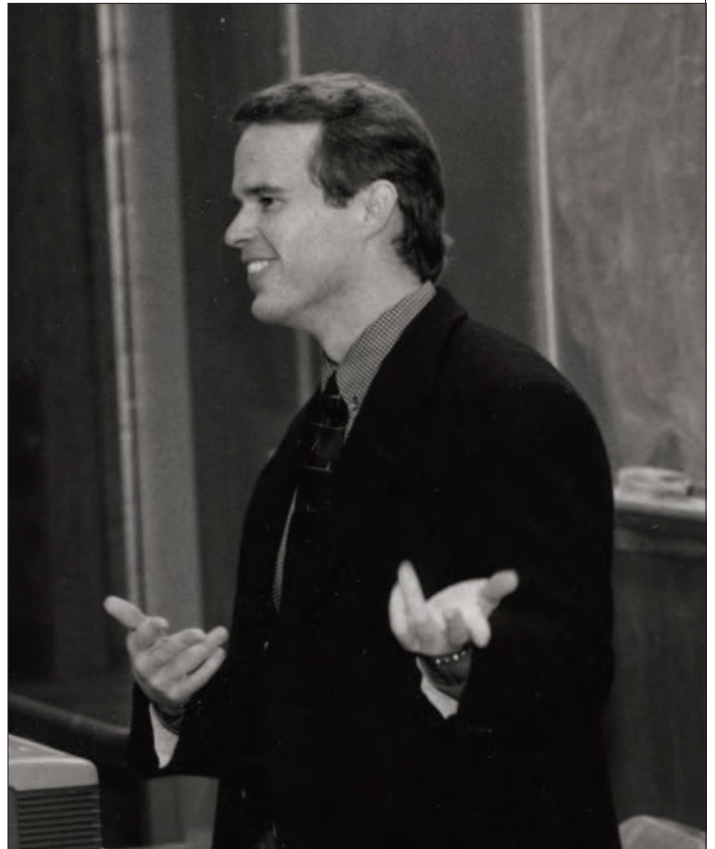
by JONATHAN SAPERS

**W**HEN HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS want to get a feel for how many of their students might be at risk for dropping out, they may soon turn to Dynamic Network Theory, a new approach developed by Teachers College Associate Professor James Westaby.

Traditional network theory focuses on linkages among people. Dynamic Network Theory provides a connection to goals as well. It also shows how interactions among people operating in eight social network roles—goal strivers, system supporters, goal preventers, supportive resisters, interactants, observers, system negators and system reactors—determine the ultimate success or failure of individuals, groups, organizations and even nations.

In a school, a goal striver and system supporters might be a student and her parents; a goal preventer might be a bully she fears so much that she sometimes stays home; an observer might be someone who influences her by watching her try to do her homework; and a system negator might be another student who disapproves of her doing homework and wants her to go to a party instead.

Westaby presents his theory in a book due out this winter called *Dynamic Network Theory: How Social Networks Influence Goal Pursuit*, to be published by the American Psychological Association. To make the theory easier for organizations to apply, he has also developed surveys for collecting data on the motivation levels of the various entities in a network and “dynamic network charts” with metrics for gauging where an organization’s



overall motivation and performance levels net out.

Westaby says his approach applies equally well to geopolitical conflict and even to the networks formed by people through social media such as Facebook and LinkedIn. People who use those tools hope to increase their professional or social success by expanding their range of system support, Westaby says. Yet online social media can sometimes become obsessions that distract users from their daily responsibilities and deadlines.

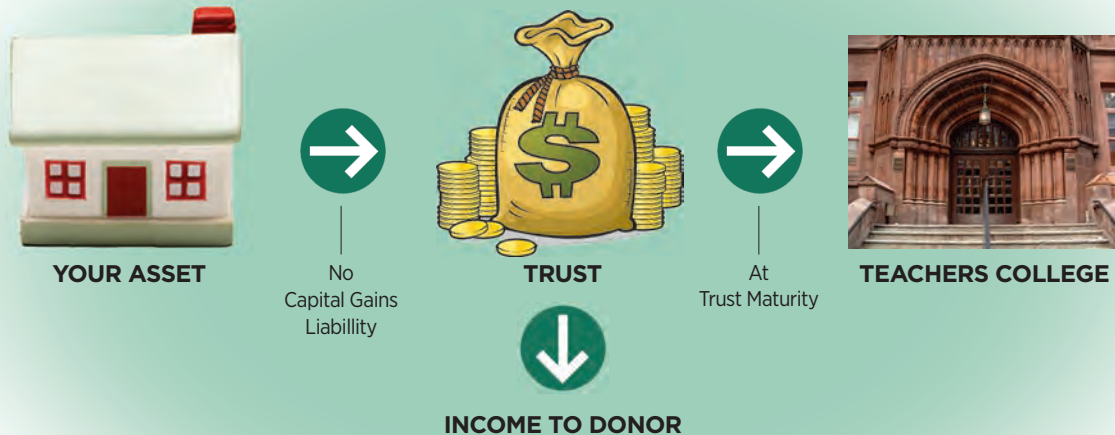
“Research really needs to examine which users are managing this whole new battery of social network connections to achieve and do well over the long haul,” Westaby says. “Maybe more people will adapt to Facebook in highly functional ways. Or maybe there will be a percentage of people who simply don’t know when to turn it off.”

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Louis Lo Ré,  
Director of Planned Giving  
**e-mail: [lore@tc.edu](mailto:lore@tc.edu)** or call  
**212-678-3037**



# THE Joy OF Dr. Ruth

Preaching good sex—and good relationships—in an uncertain world

by JOE LEVINE *Photography by* SHANNON TAGGART

**P**UT THIS DOWN. THIS IS HOW I OPERATE.” Dr. Ruth—Ruth K. Westheimer, 83-year-old, four-foot-seven-inch sex therapist extraordinaire (and orphan, Holocaust survivor, former paramilitary sniper and, not least, TC alumna)—is motioning gleefully to a trio of visiting magazine folk in her office on East 49th Street as she dials her rabbi on her iPhone. While she waits, she cups her hand over her mouth. “I used to belong to *three* synagogues—orthodox, conservative, reform. Now it’s only two—the reformed shut down.”

Westheimer informs the rabbi she’s found someone to design the synagogue’s monthly newsletter, pro bono, and hands the phone to the startled art director. “Here, talk to him. I promise you good sex for the rest of your life.”

Over the next 90 minutes, Westheimer obliges her visitors by putting on lipstick and modeling a red beret she wore

to Buckingham Palace (Prince Philip is a fan). She passes around a miniature ornamental turtle that someone brought from Mexico City for her collection (“The philosophy of my life is a turtle—if it stays in one place, it’s safe because it carries its house on its back, but if it wants to move, it has to stick its neck out”) and twice dials her longtime “Minister of Communications,” Pierre Lehu, to check on the address of friends who will be taking her to a Hasidic wedding.

“Pierre has helped me write 19 of my 36 books,” she confides proudly. “I talk and he types on the computer. It’s a wonderful relationship.”

Told that she seems to have a full calendar, Dr. Ruth nods briskly. “I was teaching at Yale and Princeton for six years, and when that ended I was worried. I’m 83, what if that’s it, and now I’m sitting at home? But it turns out I stayed busy.”

This is perhaps an understatement. Tomorrow she’s throw-



ing a party to launch her new YouTube channel, [www.youtube.com/drruth](http://www.youtube.com/drruth) (check out the clips of her telling Jerry Seinfeld to get married and visiting Condomania in Los Angeles with Arsenio Hall). In a few weeks she's going on a cruise to Morocco (she gives lectures and does signings in the ship's bookstore) and, oh, yes, she's producing a new documentary on the Haredim, ultra-Orthodox Jews who have begun serving in the Israeli military.

"I go to Israel every year, and I wanted to do a movie. But I'm a very impatient person—you know that German proverb? 'Dear God, give me patience...immediately!' So a documentary is perfect, because I can do it in a summer.

"I love the King David Hotel. They've got the names of all the celebrities who have visited, when you walk out from the dining room. There's Jacqueline Kennedy. There's Danny Kaye. And there's Dr. Ruth Westheimer. I always check to see if my name is still there." She laughs her high-pitched, girlish laugh. "It's good to be Dr. Ruth."

## THE FIRST AND ONLY

BEFORE THERE WAS DR. PHIL AND DR. LAURA AND ALL THE other TV and radio self-help personalities, there was the tiny woman with the German accent. If Dr. Ruth was not the first big-name sex therapist—before her, as she always acknowledges, there was Kinsey, Masters & Johnson, and her own mentor, Helen Singer Kaplan—she was surely the first to take to the airwaves.

"There's no one like me—put that down," she tells her office visitors. "I know how to treat men who aren't getting an erection and women who aren't getting an orgasm, but I'm also interested in the psychology and the relationship. That's why I call myself a psychosexual therapist. Also, I answer in a way that's humorous but doesn't make fun. Because it says in the Talmud that a lesson taught with humor is a lesson retained. I can't tell a joke—I'm a German Jew, we don't understand jokes—but when someone asks a question I see the opportunities for humor."

As good as she is on screen or radio, Westheimer is at her best with a live audience. Last spring, at TC's Academic Festival, she listened, frowning, to a long and rather technical question about the connections between sex and sense of smell, then pronounced with finality, "If someone's dirty, I don't want to have sex with him." To a Brazilian woman who confessed to thinking about someone other than her partner during sex, she replied, "You can fantasize about the whole Brazilian soccer team—just don't tell him." Other questions became pretexts for bridging to stories she has told countless times, always with genuine relish at winning fresh laughs.

"My late husband, Fred Westheimer—a wonderful man,

we were married for 38 years," she told the audience. "I never permitted him to come to any of my talks, and you know why? Because when I asked for questions, he would raise his hand and say, 'Don't listen to her, it's all talk.' But one time, I made an exception. Fred loved Diane Sawyer, and when *60 Minutes* came to our apartment I didn't have the heart to say, 'Fred, you can't be at home.' So we're sitting down, the cameras are rolling, and Diane Sawyer turns to Fred, first question, and says, 'So, Mr. Westheimer, how is your sex life?' To which Fred says, 'The shoemaker's children don't have any shoes.'"

Westheimer's success owes at least in part to the fact that no one else working this territory seems quite so much like your grandmother—that is, if your grandmother were given to matter-of-factly discussing foreplay and masturbation. But she also brings a unique outlook to her craft.

"She takes no second on earth for granted," says Lehu, who helped put her early radio shows on the map. "There's not a night she stays home, and if she has no plans, she'll go to Lincoln Center, and they'll always find her a seat. You have to remember that she lost everything, her parents and her home—so she looks at her grandkids and says, 'Hitler didn't want me to have these children, I'm going to enjoy them even more.'"

Hope Leichter, Elbenwood Professor of Education and Westheimer's thesis adviser at TC in the late 1960s, believes Westheimer's sincerity sets her apart.

"When you get into sex education, there's a divide between helping people and just saying things that titillate," says Leichter, whom Westheimer routinely credits for admitting her despite an exam she flunked at the New School. "It can be a wavy line. But for Ruth, being a sex therapist is a way of being joyous. She has a serious message, about contraception and the importance of relationships and family. But she's had a very tough life, and what she does is all about asserting her power to overcome and move beyond."

Equally important, Leichter says, Westheimer enjoys her celebrity but has never been seduced by it. "She's very generous and very loyal. When my husband passed away, she called me. And her social skills are amazing. She can walk into a room with all these people tagging along after her, and she remembers everyone's names and makes all these connections—not just for herself but for others, as well."

## A CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

WESTHEIMER WAS 51 AND WORKING WITH HELEN SINGER Kaplan at Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences when she fielded a request to talk about sex education to the managers of community affairs programs at New York City radio stations. A week later, WYNY offered her a 15-minute, Sunday evening spot at a quarter after midnight, and "Dr. Ruth" was born. Yet in the grand tradition of American self-invention, it was not the first time Westheimer had reimagined herself.

"My name was Karola Siegel," she writes in the opening line of her autobiography, *All in a Lifetime*. "I was 10 years old.

Dr. Ruth has generously supported TC. The Dr. Ruth Westheimer Scholarship Fund was established in 2001 to provide general scholarship support. For information about scholarships, contact TC's Office of Development and External Affairs at 212 678-3089.



The day was January 5, 1939, and I was at the railroad station in Frankfurt, Germany, saying good-bye to my family.”

An only child reared by loving parents, Karola was leaving for a group home in Switzerland as part of the *Kindertransport*, the effort that spirited Jewish children out of Nazi-occupied countries just prior to World War II. She would never see her parents or grandparents again.

Karola took care of younger children while working long days mopping floors and cleaning toilets. Girls weren't allowed to go to school, so instead of a high school diploma, she earned a degree in Swiss housekeeping (one reason she is inordinately proud of not only her own subsequent academic accomplishments, but also those of her two children: Miriam, a TC graduate and expert on home instruction for preschoolers; and Joel, a sociologist at the University of Ottawa).

At 17, unable to stay in Switzerland and unwilling to return to Germany after the war, Westheimer and several friends emigrated to Palestine. She changed her name to Ruth (Karola was deemed too German), lived on kibbutzim, joined the Zionist underground militia known as the Haganah, and learned to clean machine guns with her eyes closed. On her 20th birthday, after war erupted with the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, Westheimer ignored a warning siren to run up to her room and retrieve a book that had been a birthday present. As she returned to the first floor, a bomb exploded outside, killing another girl and nearly blowing off her legs. She recuperated for months in a ward full of male soldiers, a situation she reports enjoying immensely (if chastely). Space was so tight, and she was so small, that she slept on a bookshelf.

Eventually Westheimer met her first husband (of three), realized her dream of becoming a kindergarten teacher, studied psychology at the Sorbonne and made her way to the United States, where she earned a master's in sociology from The New School and a doctorate in community and family studies from Teachers College. She worked at Planned Parenthood and wrote her doctoral thesis on the contraceptive use and abortion histories of more than 2,000 women. It was another step toward becoming Dr. Ruth, but the connection with Leichter, then chair of a department called Home and Family Life, may have been even more fruitful.

“The catalog description of our department talked about how education takes place in a wide variety of settings and about preparing people to create new roles as well as fill existing ones,” Leichter says. “If you look at what she went on to do, I think we helped give her the tools to invent herself.” The invention process did not end with the emergence of Dr. Ruth. Westheimer has written books on grandparenting, power as an aphrodisiac, great erotic art throughout history and the role of music in her own life. She has also made several documentaries on the integration of ethnic minorities into Israeli life, including Ethiopian Jews, the Bedouin, the Druse, the Circassians and now the Haredim. Each focuses on issues of preserving culture, material that leads into choppy waters, particularly for a self-proclaimed Zionist who resolutely ducks questions of politics. In the film on the Bedouin, several Bedouin talk openly about how Israel has taken away their nomadic freedom.

“Look, I'm very concerned about Israel these days, but I've been concerned about Israel for 20 years,” Westheimer says, shrugging. Bottom line: “We Jews need a country so what has happened will never happen again.”

Still, posterity will likely remember Westheimer as the sex therapist with a charming combination of innocence and wisdom. Her YouTube site is part of an effort to educate a younger crowd. (She also has 14,000 followers on Twitter.) And playwright Mark St. Germain, who wrote *Freud's Last Session*, is writing a play about her with Debra Jo Rupp in the lead role. The set will be modeled on Westheimer's Washington Heights apartment, where she's lived for more than 50 years.

A few days after the interview in her office, Westheimer hosts a reporter there. She proudly shows off more of her turtles; some Chinese art with hidden erotic panels; a ram's-horn shofar from Jerusalem; and a ceremonial sword given to her by Jewish cadets at West Point. Still, it's the photo of her with Paul McCartney that catches the visitor's eye.

“Ah, the Beatle,” she nods judiciously. “That was at Yale's graduation two years ago. We ran into each other on line, and he says, ‘Hullo, Ruthie.’ And I said, ‘Sing me, something.’ He sang, ‘She loves you, yeah, yeah, yeah.’ Suddenly there's a big crowd standing around us, and a reporter snapped a picture.” She laughs. It's good to be Dr. Ruth. **TC**

Check out a video interview with Dr. Ruth as well as some of her documentaries at <http://bit.ly/w3rPKA>

# FIGHTING *Stereotype Threat* IN THE WORKPLACE

A lot of good research on diversity training is not being applied.  
Loriann Roberson is working to bridge that gap *by* JONATHAN SAPERS



FROM HER EARLIEST EXPERIENCE WITH diversity training, Loriann Roberson has been troubled by what she sees as a gulf between theory and practice. “It just drove me crazy how some of the diversity training didn’t apply any of the good practices identified by research,” says Roberson, Professor of Education in TC’s Department of Organization and Leadership. “It was well meaning, but not very useful.”

Roberson is working to address that issue on a variety of fronts. Recently, as consultants to a federally funded study of women scientists, she and fellow TC faculty member Caryn Block amassed a database of how these women perceive and respond to stereotype threat. Using that data, they are creating a survey to measure the level of perceived stereotype threat within organizations.

Roberson also is writing a book on diversity management strategies, and she and her research partner Carol Kulik, of the University of South Australia, were recently commissioned to write a chapter for *The Oxford Handbook on Workplace Diversity*. The two are particularly engaged in translating research insights about stereotype threat to the workplace.

Stereotype threat, a concept pioneered by social scientist Claude Steele, is the extent to which the perception of being stereotyped influences a person’s performance. For example, researchers have shown

that women may do worse on a math test than male counterparts if they’re told, as they sit down to take the test, that women have fared more poorly on the test in the past—or, more broadly, that women simply aren’t good at math. Similarly, when white adults are told, just prior to taking a test of unconscious racial attitudes, that whites typically react more positively to white faces than faces of color, they will generally reveal more negative racial attitudes on the test.

Based on these and other findings, Roberson and Kulik argue the need for safeguards in many common workplace situations. Take, for example, a white manager who goes out of her way to give an employee of color a so-called stretch assignment that might represent an opportunity for advancement. Since stereotype threat occurs on the most difficult tasks, the manager needs to be aware of that risk and to help the employee develop strategies for screening out or coping with undermining signals from others. “Managers who aren’t aware of stereotype threat and give stretch assignments might see failure, because coping with stereotype threat takes up cognitive resources,” Roberson says. “And when employees are struggling with it, they don’t have enough resources to work on the task at hand.”

Roberson and Kulik are also examining the option of Employee Resource Groups, which they argue can be highly beneficial in countering stereotype threat by providing at-risk employees with access to high-achieving mentors in the organization who are of the same gender or race. Employee Resource Groups were previously examined during the 1990s by researcher Ray Friedman, who found that the networks “facilitate advancement because people expand their social networks” even across racial or ethnic lines, which increases their resources and information. For Roberson, anything that enlarges an employee’s context at work beyond the constraints of stereotypes is beneficial. “Managers need to attend to managing the environment and reducing the cues that signal to employees that stereotypes are operating,” she and Kulik write. “Only then can the benefits of diversity be realized.”

TC

Can we all go from good to great?

Warner Burke is testing a theory that could finally transform leadership development into a science

by JONATHAN SAPERS



FORGET  
ABOUT  
TURNAROUND  
SPECIALISTS.

# *Can the Boss Learn?*

**W**HEN WARNER BURKE TALKS TO GROUPS of executives and managers, he asks everyone in the room to write down what they think are the five most important characteristics of a highly successful leader. Then he bets his audience five dollars that no two lists will be the same and another five dollars that no single characteristic will show up on all the lists.

"I've never lost," says Burke, the Edward Lee Thorndike Professor of Psychology and Education at Teachers College and Chair of TC's Department of Organization and Leadership.

Burke has been confident of his odds because he knows that while there are many theories of successful leadership, very little substantive research has been done on what an effective leader actually does.

"We just don't have, in psychology, hard, sufficiently clear evidence of what a successful leader looks like and how he or she behaves," Burke says. "So the theories are all over the place."

Companies aren't doing any better at picking winners. Half of all leaders fail or are fired, yet employers persist in selecting them on the basis of qualities that have no proven connection to success, such as proficiency in the organization's core skill. For instance, a brilliant researcher might be selected to head R&D regardless of his other qualities. "The correlation between technical expertise and leadership effectiveness is zero, and on that point there is a ton of evidence," Burke says.

Now, though, Burke believes he has identified the X factor that determines effective leadership: "learning agility," essentially a person's ability to adapt to new situations and learn new things. Over the past four years, with the help of Ph.D. students in his Psychology of Management and Leadership Competencies working group, Burke has developed a questionnaire that companies could eventually use to gauge learning agility in promising employees.

Burke began to form his ideas about learning agility early in his own career, which featured, among other things, a stint helping British Airways become a private corporation. "I saw in my consulting work with executives that those who seem to really be the cream of the crop are those who also seem to be able to continue to learn," Burke says. "And therefore their arrogance score was on the low side. One of the biggest derailers for people in positions of leadership is arrogance."

Over the years, literature in the field increasingly confirmed that learning agility might indeed play a key role in leadership effectiveness—and in particular that one's learning approach is important to one's growth and development. But Burke was unhappy with the measures of learning agility he was able to unearth and so decided to develop what he is calling the Leadership Agility Scale.



He and his working group, made up of a changing cast of seasoned doctoral students, spent three years developing 128 questions, which they have since whittled down to 29 and tested on groups of students and others.

Over the past year or so, the group has put the now nearly finished questionnaire through further paces, most recently for what is called "construct validity," or similarity to tests of related characteristics. For example, Burke's test was given alongside measurements of five key personality traits by the Center for Creative Leadership in Greensboro, North Carolina, with a particular eye toward results that matched those for the Center's test for "openness" to new experience. "Our correlation with the CCL data was pretty damn good. So we're happy as clowns about that," Burke says.

What's next? Burke hopes to compare questionnaire results with the grades received by the 60 cadets in the course he teaches on leadership at West Point. The key question: "Will their score on learning agility correlate positively with their final grade in the course?"

After that, Burke hopes to broaden his study to compare survey results for 250 West Point cadets to their academic performance. If the data compare favorably, Burke says he will then be ready to submit his scale and data for publication.

If the Leadership Agility Scale can accurately predict leadership effectiveness, Burke points out, consultants who advise companies on leadership selection could be eager to use it. But Burke, who has authored other seminal tools and texts, including the widely used Burke/Litwin model of organizational change, says he is not interested in making a profit from it. "It's really for research purposes," he says. "The whole point is to make it available to anyone who wants to use it." **TC**



To give to the fund, contact Scott Rubin at 212-678-3722 or e-mail [sr2670@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:sr2670@tc.columbia.edu).

# Unselfish Behaviorism

A TC adjunct faculty member is literally giving all he's got to help students in his program

**A**DJUNCT PROFESSORS DON'T MAKE A LOT OF money. So Suzanne Murphy, TC's Vice President for Development and External Affairs, was a bit startled when one approached her last spring with a proposal to donate his annual TC salary in order to create, over a period of years, a scholarship fund of \$250,000.

"I've worked with many donors over the years and seen many generous gifts, but this one is truly extraordinary," says Murphy.

The fund—which she hopes will be augmented by gifts from others—will support doctoral students in the Applied Behavioral Analysis program led by R. Douglas Greer, Professor of Psychology and Education. The program has trained generations of teachers and researchers in techniques for helping children with autism and other language, learning and behavior disorders. The donor—who has asked to remain anonymous—is not only a graduate of the program, but has also personally struggled with severe attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and a range of learning disabilities all his life.

"I was the bad kid in school—the class clown who read three levels below grade and got put in the corner all the time," he says. "I can't really tell you what made the difference for me, but I know that the techniques I learned in

Doug Greer's program have helped me save many lives. These tactics are scientifically validated, and there are thousands of other kids across the country who could benefit from teachers who are trained."

Greer's teaching system is based on the ideas of his own late mentor, the behavioral psychologist B.F. Skinner. The guiding precept is that human beings learn to do things (or not do them) in response to "reinforcers"—food, encouragement and other stimuli. Over the past 40 years, Greer and his students have created scores of reinforcement-based interventions to induce children with language deficits to reach milestones in their preverbal development. They have helped hundreds of autistic children speak their first words and many thousands more to lead normal lives. More recently, they have demonstrated that the same techniques can be highly effective in mainstream classrooms with children who are English language learners or whose language deficits are the result of growing up in disadvantaged circumstances.

"The beauty of Doug's system is that, first of all, it is comprehensive, by which I mean that no theory is excluded," the donor says. "It draws on everything from Bandura's observational learning theory to the mnemonic devices of cognitive psychology. It's all about what really works. These techniques are also effective with all students, regardless of how they have been classified. And we apply them across homes and communities as well as in the classroom, so that all the key players in a child's life are using the same tactics."

Many students can't afford to pay full tuition for Greer's program, the donor says—an issue he understands from personal experience.

"I myself would never have been able to afford the doctoral training here if Doug hadn't awarded me an 80 percent merit scholarship," he says, adding that Greer saw past other obstacles as well. "I told him that, with my ADHD and learning disabilities, my GRE scores were very low. Doug said—and I'll never forget this—'How can a score on a standardized test determine whether you're going to become an effective and caring educator?'"

"All we hear about nowadays is the achievement gap and how important it is to close it. Doug Greer has been showing us the way for the past 42 years. I've been in the field a long time, and I've heard about numerous reforms, but his system really works." **TC**



# What Is Altruism, and Why Is It Important?

by ELIZABETH MIDLARSKY

**T**HE 20TH CENTURY WAS REplete with wars and genocides. Rape, domestic abuse, school violence and elder abuse captured our attention. In the face of all this terror, how has our species been able to survive?

Philosophers, ethologists and evolutionary biologists argue for an “altruistic gene” and speculate that a species marked more by altruism than by aggression has a better chance to survive because altruism is an important part of what Darwin meant by “fitness.” From a psychological perspective, in addition to any genetic predisposition that may be present, phenomena such as nurturance and courageous compassion are prosocial (altruistic) behaviors that can be taught and developed in the home and in the school.

Among the Holocaust-era non-Jewish rescuers whom I studied, those who survived the war emerged with less material wealth, but also less psychopathology and a greater sense of having done “the right thing.” They sought no recognition but felt what some described as a “warm glow” in late life. The relatively healthy older adults (ages 65–110) whom I study seem to become more altruistic with increasing age, are energized by their own helpful actions and feel that their lives matter to others. In Western so-

ciety, parents are taught that each child must get his or her needs met and be protected from “adult” responsibility. However, children who have caregiver roles in the family often do well in school and may become the altruists of their generation—the compassionate nurses, firefighters, doctors and social workers.

Education in school and at home must transcend the acquisition solely of facts, skills and “proper” behavior. Students must be taught in an environment filled with encouragement and justice, in which each student is seen as a lovable human being, not only as a vessel to be filled. When each student feels that he or she is important and worthwhile, while being helped to learn, then our world will be a better place.

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ELIZABETH MIDLARSKY is Professor of Psychology and Education



“Giving is more joyous than receiving, not because it is a deprivation, but because in the act of giving lies the expression of my aliveness.” — ERICH FROMM



# OVERCOMING *Constraints*

**I**N A STORY THAT BEGINS ON PAGE 29, JAMES COMER, A GIANT IN AMERICAN school reform (and a Teachers College trustee), says that throughout his career he has sought “to understand...why institutions and structures were contributing to student underachievement and then measuring it rather than promoting success.”

School is only one theater of achievement in which psychology has helped individuals, organizations and even nations overcome internal and external limitations.

In this section, we profile TC faculty, alumni and others who ask:

**Nature or nurture?**

*How physiology, poverty and ethnic and cultural diversity combine to shape who we are and how others see us*

**How do we live in a traumatic world?**

*New insights into human resilience to trauma, grief and abuse*

**Why can't we all get along?**

*Braving the maelstrom of intractable conflict*



Through a wide range of studies, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn has led the way in showing how environments influence the well-being of young people

by JONATHAN  
SAPERS

# THE *Eclectic*

DEVELOPMENTALIST

**I**N A RECENT ISSUE OF *MONITOR ON PSYCHOLOGY* MAGAZINE, Jeanne Brooks-Gunn was reported to be “giddy with excitement.”

The cause: She and her colleagues are using techniques from a new branch of molecular biology called social genomics to look at gene expression in some 3,000 pairs of samples from mothers and children in the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study. The study, to which Brooks-Gunn contributes as a developmental psychologist, has followed children born to unmarried parents in 20 cities from birth to age 9. It also follows the mothers and fathers. The study has been gathering data on how child outcomes (health, behavior and achievement) are influenced by environmental factors, including parenting, economic and employment status, and neighborhood conditions.

Now, using social genomics, the researchers will be able to observe the interplay between environment and genetics by seeing how the genes of study participants—young children in particular—switch on and off in response to their surroundings.

“Genetics and environment really do go together, and it’s not one or the other,” says Brooks-Gunn, the Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor of Child and Parent Development at Teachers College. Perhaps more than any other developmental psychologist, Brooks-Gunn has documented the impact of poverty on human development. “And I just am loving these new [social genomics] techniques.”

Social genomics may be new, but Brooks-Gunn, who also co-directs the National Center for Children and Families, has spent her career exploring how biology and the environment combine to shape human identity. Her work has brought her numerous accolades, including the prestigious James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award from the Association for Psychological Science and election to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.

Brooks-Gunn confounds attempts to pigeonhole her in a single academic field or to simplify the connections among her wide-ranging research interests. She has conducted studies on postpartum depression, the impact of tidy households on learning, subsidized public housing, and the extent to which a new mother’s decision to work influences her child’s well-being. Still, all of her research ultimately focuses on the experience of women, children and the families around them, with an emphasis on the impact of disparities in wealth and other resources.

“I think that most scientists, regardless of what field they’re in, do what I do,” says Brooks-Gunn, who holds a joint professorial appointment in pediatrics at Columbia University’s College of Physicians and Surgeons. “Basically, when I learn something from an article or a colleague, I wonder how that fact fits into my existing framework on how to understand children’s development. Often, the result is that I change my framework and start new research projects.”

In 1983, for example, as part of their newly launched Adoles-

cent Study Program, Brooks-Gunn and Michelle Warren, an endocrinology researcher at Columbia, studied teenage girls who were ballet dancers, swimmers and skaters. The study sought to shed light on how girls adapt to different social and environmental demands, particularly when their body type runs counter to a given set of expectations. It was the beginning of a focus on environmental influence that would ultimately come to define much of Brooks-Gunn’s career.

In “Unexpected Opportunities: Confessions of an Eclectic Developmentalist,” an essay in the 1996 book *The Developmental Psychologist*, Brooks-Gunn wrote that “girls in dance company schools were compared with girls in non-dance schools in order to examine the goodness of fit between the requirements of a particular social context and a person’s physical and behavioral characteristics.” For dancers, for whom “thin” is the archetype, being a late bloomer physically was better, while blooming earlier tended to lead to greater stress—the opposite of the experience among the regular population.

## FROM THE PERSONAL TO THE PANORAMIC

TODAY BROOKS-GUNN IS KNOWN FOR RUNNING MULTIDISCIPLINARY, longitudinal, quantitative studies, such as Fragile Families, which other researchers will continue to mine for decades. Yet she started out using qualitative methods to address questions that grew directly out of personal concerns.

In the early 1970s, soon after earning a Ph.D. in human learning and development from the University of Pennsylvania, Brooks-Gunn conducted a small study of women’s differing experiences with menstruation and menarche (first menstruation). She chose the topic in part because of her own experience of dysmenorrhea (severe cramping), which repeatedly incapacitated her and resulted in numerous visits to the emergency room. Family and friends were largely unsympathetic, suggesting she was overwrought and needed to ignore her symptoms.

Subsequently, Brooks-Gunn and Diane Ruble, a psychologist then at Princeton, collaborated on a wider study of perceptions of menstruation and then of menarche. They found that girls’ views of menstruation were influenced by a range of factors including culture and religion and that their experiences of menarche were constructed as much from previously formed expectations as from direct experience of symptoms. Much of the literature on menarche at the time described the experience as painful, embarrassing and even traumatic.

“We reframed the crisis model into an examination of the meaning of menarche to girls and into a normative transition rather than on a normative crisis framework,” Brooks-Gunn writes in “Confessions of an Eclectic Developmentalist,” “After all, menarche was an indication of becoming an adult female, so was this necessarily negative? Did all girls resist growing up? Weren’t there self-enhanc-

## Brooks-Gunn has learned “the limits of applying techniques developed by middle class professionals.”

ing aspects of becoming mature?”

Following that work, Brooks-Gunn persuaded Johnson & Johnson, which produced feminine products along with pamphlets and films used in health classes for girls, to fund a conference for researchers who study menarche. As a result of the conference, Brooks-Gunn coauthored the book *Girls at Puberty* and began exploring the psychological meanings of a range of events associated with puberty, an area that seemed largely “taboo outside of medical and health education circles.”

By the mid-1980s, Brooks-Gunn and her collaborators had established an understanding of the connection between menarche and a wide range of adolescent concerns, from girls’ ability to separate from their mothers to the role of family issues in adolescence. Among their insights was that adolescence is not just about changes in children but is also a reflection of simultaneous, profound changes in the family itself.

### THE UNEVEN PLAYING FIELD

IF THE STUDY OF MENARCHE AND MENSTRUATION BROUGHT Brooks-Gunn into the realm of biological science, her work on pregnancy led her to focus on disparity.

In the early 1980s, Brooks-Gunn participated in a discussion at the Commonwealth Fund on inadequate and late prenatal care for poor women. As a result of that meeting, she ended up collaborating with Margaret Heagarty, a leading researcher on pediatric AIDs who was then based at Harlem Hospital, and Marie McCormick, an expert on maternal and child health at Harvard, on a study of the experience of pregnancy among poor black women in Harlem. Beyond learning about what pregnancy meant to the women in the study, Brooks-Gunn also came to understand what she describes in her “Confessions” essay as “the limits of applying techniques developed by middle-class professionals within communities with different value systems and experiences.”

Subsequently, Brooks-Gunn worked with University of Pennsylvania sociologist Frank Furstenberg on studies of primarily black, lower- and working-class teenage mothers in Baltimore who had received treatment at a clinic run by Furstenberg’s parents, a social worker and an obstetrician. The collaboration began as the children of the teenage mothers were reaching adolescence and extended to three additional follow-up studies in which four generations of 300 families were seen over a 20-year period.

One of the most surprising findings of the Baltimore studies was that while the teen mothers, in large part, fared better than expected economically, outcomes for their children were quite negative. Why? Brooks-Gunn’s and Furstenberg’s research found that the mothers’ struggle to avoid poverty “levied a cost” on their children. “The amount of

time the teenage mother had available, the need for complex childcare arrangements, the absence of the father, lower educational attainment and, in some cases, reduced economic circumstance,” all took a toll on the children’s experiences, Brooks-Gunn wrote in “Unexpected Opportunities.”

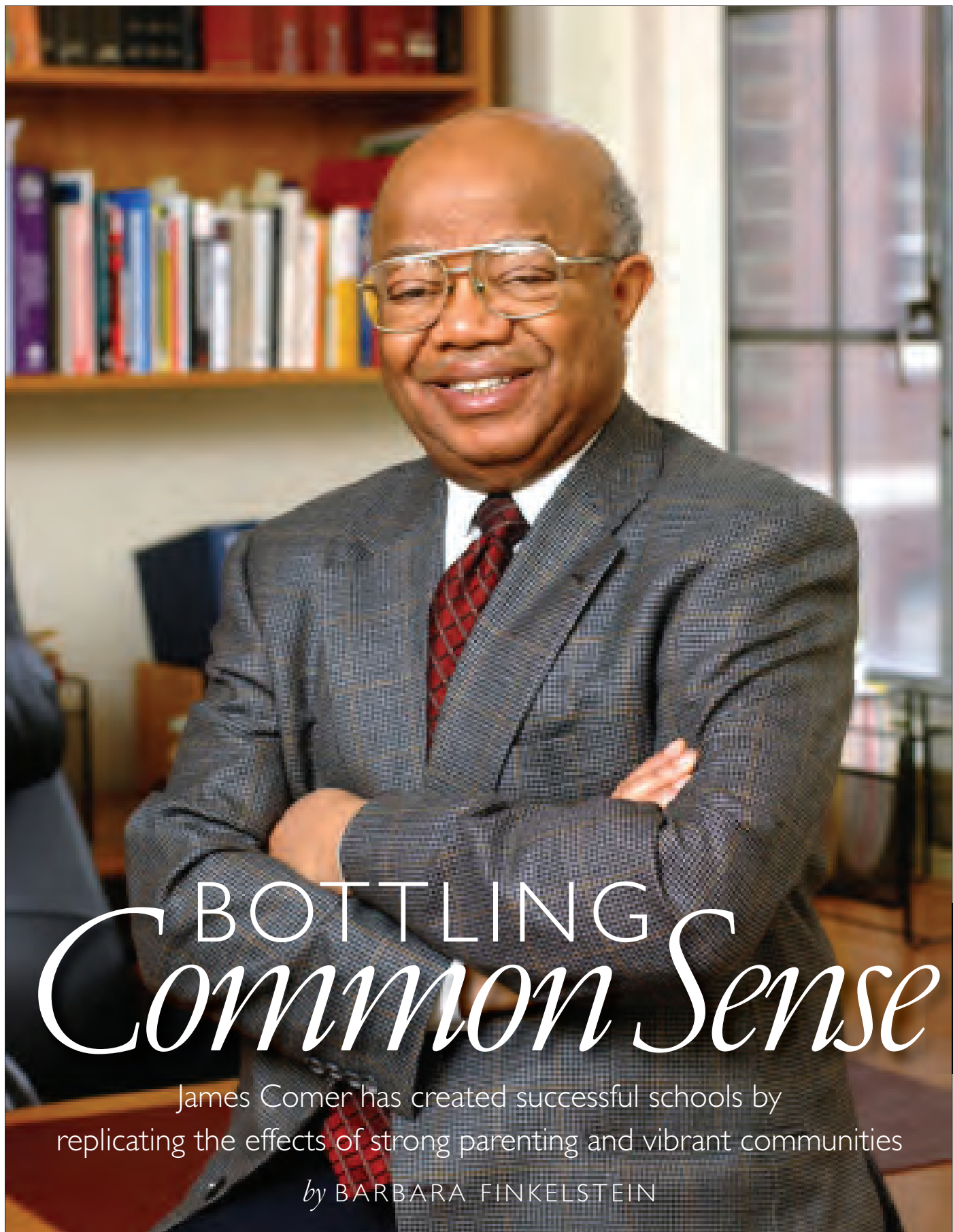
All of this field work uniquely prepared Brooks-Gunn for her subsequent leadership of Fragile Families and three other large-scale trials: the Infant Health and Development Program, which focuses on the benefits of early treatment for low birth-weight babies; the Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods, a study of 7,000 families in 80 neighborhoods that documents various specific effects of low income on children, including juvenile delinquency, adult crime, substance abuse and violence; and Early Head Start Research and Evaluation. In some instances, she has not only helped shape the study design, but also taken the lead in convening researchers from many different fields.

For Brooks-Gunn, it’s all a logical outgrowth of her earliest, smallest-scale work.

“I’m still interested in social cognition underlying how people define themselves,” she says. “That was my self-recognition in puberty work. The puberty work led to a whole thing on reproductive changes. Then, I added work on sexuality, pregnancy and early parenting, all of the developmental progressions that we all go through. Those pieces got me interested in how biology and environment together influence development. And then came the intractable problems and disparities. Because when you get into the disparities, all the things I’ve done before make sense.”

Her journey continues. One day this past fall, in the second-floor office of the National Center for Families and Children in TC’s Thorndike Hall, Margo Gardner, a research scientist who works with Brooks-Gunn at the National Center for Children and Families, clicks open a new software program. It doesn’t look like much: several squares with tiny dots on them. But those squares and dots could be the beginnings of a means to forecast and analyze the evolution of a school and the development of students and teachers over time, based on just the kind of information that Brooks-Gunn has been collecting and mining for new insights throughout her career.

“I was very skeptical in the beginning that simulations could be useful,” Brooks-Gunn says. “But I was in Ann Arbor and we were doing a real simple one, and it was really cool. We were fainting over it. We’ll see how useful it is. Is it going to be a huge trend later?” Only time will tell, but judging from Brooks-Gunn’s track record, this is one software program that’s worth keeping an eye on. **TC**



# BOTTLING *Common Sense*

James Comer has created successful schools by replicating the effects of strong parenting and vibrant communities

*by* BARBARA FINKELSTEIN

JAMES COMER HAS BEEN ONE OF THE GIANTS OF SCHOOL reform for the past several decades, but he has never forgotten his three friends from East Chicago, Indiana. Like him, they were born in the mid-1930s to African-American parents who worked as steel mill laborers and domestics.

Comer earned degrees at Indiana University, the College of Medicine at Howard University and the University of Michigan School of Public Health, and then went on to become the Maurice Falk Professor of Child Psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine Child Study Center.

His friends, however, met very different fates. One succumbed to alcoholism, another spent part of his life in prison, and a third died in a mental institution. Comer, a Teachers College trustee, has been haunted his entire adult life by a simple question: *Why them and not me?*

Comer has one answer: His parents created a family life conducive to learning. That insight forms the subtext to his 10 books, hundreds of articles, and widely hailed Comer School Development Program.

"In the evenings after work, my mother and father would take us out to Lake Michigan," Comer says. "They would play with my brothers, sisters and me in the park. At dinner we'd hash out ideas and problems that had come up during the day. And for a snack, we'd have my mother's home-made malted milk and popcorn. I didn't know it then, but every activity my parents carried out with us had an educational motive."

Or, as Comer wrote in *Waiting for a Miracle: Why Schools Can't Solve Our Problems—and How We Can*, "All of these experiences, particularly the informally supervised debates, provided us with the stuff that academic success is made of: confidence, interaction skills, thinking and articulation, attacking and defending arguments, analyzing and solving problems, cultural literacy and more."

## SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT DATA

COMER ALWAYS FELT THAT HIS PARENTS, HUGH AND MAGGIE, provided a strong measure of what Maggie called common sense. But in the 1960s, when he trained in public health at the University of Michigan, studied adult psychiatry at Yale and took an assignment at the National Institute of Mental Health, Comer increasingly came to understand that "good childhood experiences," including a caring family, regular churchgoing, basketball games and even trips to the circus, "are the foundation for good learning and good development." Feeling that psychiatry was looking at the individual in a social vacuum, he wondered if it was possible to "bottle" the family habits that had prepared him to excel in school and apply them in his work. He sought to "put my experiences together and begin to understand...why institutions and structures were contributing to student underachievement and then measuring it rather than promoting success."

In 1967, while working at NIMH, Comer became convinced that the research in his field was focused on collecting the wrong kind of data and that a very different

"I didn't know it then, but every activity my parents carried out with us had an educational motive."

approach might demonstrate which social and cultural factors could have a positive influence on children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The deciding factor was a study at NIMH that sought to examine five American cities that had been rocked by riots and five cities—the control group—that hadn't been. But before the study even began, the second set of cities experienced riots too. Comer recognized that the study's methodology was inadequate: The researchers had come up with a constant that couldn't be counted on, so the results would have no practical applications in the classroom. More broadly, as he saw it, the idea of quantifying social reality, popular in scientific circles at the time, was itself flawed. Such an approach rarely, if ever, accounted for powerful yet intangible behavioral influences, such as culture, history and group experiences, because they were difficult to quantify. Researchers were trusting mathematical models, theories and hypotheses to describe social reality, yet it was the social and behavioral intangibles that could shape the course of an individual's life.

At the invitation of Albert Solnit, then the director of the Yale Child Study Center, Comer returned to Yale to direct a school intervention program. He had not yet concluded that school was the de facto intersection point of cognitive activity, group and individual history, culture, nutrition—indeed, nearly every factor that goes into the construction of a complete human being. All he knew was that the prevailing quantitative approach to social structures, including schools, would yield no useful study results. With peer support, he developed an "exploratory demonstration model" to study two underperforming elementary schools in New Haven, Connecticut. His goal was ambitious: Change the climate and culture at the schools so adults could provide students with experiences that would motivate them to learn—and then implement the program in schools across the country.

The joint project between the Yale Child Study Center and the New Haven public school system was hardly smooth sailing. Comer's intervention model depended on the diagnostic and treatment approach used in medicine. "The knowledge and skills gained from life experience and professional training informed our diagnostic efforts and treatment/intervention approaches," he wrote in an essay titled "From There to Here." "The 'patient' was the dysfunctional



system(s)—including classroom and building practices, policy makers and practice leaders at every level.”

The thorny issue of quantitative results, though, would not go away. In the third year of the five-year project, a reporter observed one of the schools for a week and recognized that the students were thriving. He couldn't write a story, though, because he could not say how the improvement had come about. Oddly, the funding organization that evaluated the joint project arrived at another conclusion. It said the students needed one-on-one psychiatric care and withdrew its financial support.

And yet Comer's greatest achievement grew out of this sidelined project. Many of the structural components that he and his colleagues enacted in their demonstration model ultimately became the nine core elements of the School Development Program (SDP), a teacher-parent-community collaboration that fosters the educational and overall development of children.

## A TEAM APPROACH

SDP IDENTIFIES THREE GROUPS, OR “MECHANISMS,” THAT serve as the infrastructure for each participating Comer school: a parent team, a school planning and management team (usually led by the principal) and a student and staff support team, originally called the mental health team. All of these teams have one overriding purpose: to promote desirable child development and behavior. The teams also embrace three guiding principles: consensus (so there are no winners and losers), collaboration among all stakeholders and a no-fault attitude to prevent divisive finger-pointing.

At the center of the SDP process is the comprehensive school plan, a mix of academic curricula and activities that build social skills, such as book fairs, fashion shows, field trips, fund-raising projects and potluck suppers. There is also a staff development plan whereby teachers can acquire new skills and an assessment and modification function that gives schools the flexibility to change course as needed. All of it, Comer says, grew organically out of a process in which all the players were working and thinking together.

To date, more than 1,000 U.S. schools in 82 school districts in 26 states have used the School Development Plan. (The model has also been adopted in Ireland, South Africa, Trinidad and England.) All of these schools have had to confront the myriad social challenges that arise from low family income, recent immigration, language barriers and an urban environment. Yet many of these schools report stunning results after five years. As related in *The Kids Got Smarter: Case Studies of Successful Comer Schools*, at one urban school where students and parents speak 17 different languages and dialects, student test scores have risen steadily since the school adopted SDP. For three consecutive years, scores in every area of the Abbreviated Stanford Achievement Test showed gains. At another Comer method school, one that stands adjacent to a neighborhood marked by heavy drug dealing,

low-income housing and abandoned buildings, the discovery of lead contamination on the school's playground created a surprisingly productive partnership between the school and the state's public health department. Indeed, the school gained a reputation as an advocate for community health.

Not every Comer school is a success story. By his own accounting, about one-third of SDP schools have improved dramatically, one-third have improved modestly and about one-third have not improved. Many factors contribute to a complete lack of improvement, he says. The most notable is lack of buy-in by players in different parts of the school ecosystem.

In one case, for example, an SDP school went from being the lowest-achieving school in its district to the highest. But the superintendent insisted that the results had come about through cheating. “With great media fanfare and under central-office management, the students had to take the state test over again,” Comer wrote in “From There to Here.” “When the students did even better the second time, there was almost no media coverage.” The superintendent ended up removing the principal and several other school staff, and the school, Comer wrote, “was plunged back to its underperforming status within a year.”

Today Comer stands by his ideas but says he ought to have been more politically savvy. “I probably made a mistake in thinking that the evidence would speak for itself,” he says. “I believed that successful outcomes would have an impact that would force people to change. It would have been time well spent if I had developed a group of powerful contacts that could advocate for us at the legislative level.”

Comer's peers, meanwhile, locate him in the pantheon of education reformers. “I have often thought that James Comer and John Dollard, who wrote *Psychotherapy and Learning*, should have gotten together at Yale,” wrote Edmund Gordon, Richard March Hoe Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Education at TC, in response to an emailed query for this story. “Dollard sought to make the conceptual connection between psychotherapy and human learning, while Comer demonstrated the practical connection between school learning and mental health, i.e., psychosocial well-being. History will note that the fields of pedagogy, psychiatry and psychology owe an enormous debt to these two giants. It was my good fortune to have held hands with both.”

Perhaps Comer's most important impact has stemmed from his insistence that educators and researchers rely on concrete, usable data, from the initial school visits assessing the challenges that students, teachers and parents face to the final analysis of SDP results. In a world where funding allocations and student-teacher ratios increasingly depend on hard evidence of success, it turns out that data-driven processes are often the only quantifiable research that will win support to turn around ailing schools.

When they do, perhaps the descendants of James Comer's old East Chicago friends will have the chance to become what their fathers could not. **TC**



MAKING  
THE SAFE  
SPACE

# Safe

**I**T'S THE MORNING AFTER COLUMBUS DAY, AND THE topic in Derald Wing Sue's weekly Counseling Psychology seminar is what it means to be white.

"Why do we celebrate Columbus Day?" Sue asks by way of introduction. "There's a hidden communication. The celebration of Columbus elevates the status and prestige of the white European male," while portraying indigenous people as the "discovered." In reality, he reminds the class, it was Columbus who was lost.

For the next 90 minutes, Sue, Professor of Psychology and Education, leads his dozen or so doctoral students in a discussion that ranges from the feeling of helplessness that can accompany one's first realization of the enduring pervasiveness of racial signals in our society to how to move beyond defensive reactions and into productive conversations. One student ruefully recalls her enthusiasm in organizing high school celebrations of Christmas, Easter and other holidays from which some of her fellow students might have felt alienated.

If it sounds as though Sue has an agenda, it's because he does: to prepare his students—a multiethnic group themselves—to work as therapists in diverse environments, in a nation that, within the next few decades, will become majority nonwhite. "Your ability to work effectively with

clients is only as good as your understanding of these realities," he tells the class.

For the past several decades, Sue has been a leader in the fight to move identity and difference—race, gender, sexual orientation—to the center of counseling psychology and to spotlight the impact these issues can have on the mental well-being of people who stand outside the mainstream.

Sue is certainly motivated by his own experience: Growing up Chinese American in a mostly white area of Portland, Oregon, he experienced the crude injuries of schoolyard taunts. He trained at the University of Oregon when there were few graduate students of color. "There was not even a discussion or terms that dealt with multiculturalism or diversity," he said in a recent interview in his office. "As a person of color going to school, I always felt that sense of alienation and invalidation."

He credits his awakening to the Black Power movement and the 1969 Third World strikes at the University of California, Berkeley, that pushed for ethnic studies curricula. In 1972 Sue cofounded and served as the first President of the Asian American Psychological Association—a radical upstart at the time.

Over time, Sue, who taught and practiced on the West Coast for many years before coming to TC, became one

Derald Wing Sue has made generations of therapists and social scientists aware of the need to address issues of race, gender and sexual orientation

by SIDDHARTHA MITTER

of the nation's most influential scholars in counseling psychology. His textbook *Counseling the Culturally Diverse*, first written in the 1980s, is in its sixth edition. He served on President Bill Clinton's Advisory Board on Race.

But it's only recently that Sue's work has leapt into the mainstream. His 2010 book, *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, has earned him television and radio appearances (and prestigious awards) for its discussion of microaggressions—the often unintended or unconsciously inflicted slights that members of minority groups experience constantly at the hands of the dominant group.

"Racism has morphed and gone underground," he says. So, to some degree, have sexism, homophobia and other forms of prejudice. But microaggressions are rife: the woman who clutches her purse when riding in an elevator with a black man; the teacher who praises a nonwhite student's English; the man who talks about "woman's intuition."

Microaggressions may be unintended, but they take a heavy toll over time on their victims (and also, Sue argues, on their perpetrators, who alienate their colleagues), particularly in workplaces, schools—and counseling and therapy.

While not the first to identify microaggressions or to coin the term, Sue saw more keenly than most how easily the subject got swatted away. "The language of microaggressions wasn't developed," he says. "Most people in the public pooh-poohed it, like: 'Hey, I get putdowns all the time, and I'm a white man.'"

With a team of advanced students, he set out to show not just that microaggressions were real, but that they could be observed and categorized in ways that reveal the specific kinds of harm they cause. "We developed a taxonomy of microaggressions," he says. The team published it in the journal *American Psychologist*, and watched the reactions stream in.

"There were two camps," Sue says. "People of color really related to it. They began to say, 'It provides me with a language to explain my experiential reality.' It validated what they were going through.

"A lot of white psychologists, however, said, 'You're making a mountain out of a molehill.' They said that these are things everyone goes through, that we were portraying people of color as weak."

In response, Sue's book shows how microaggressions occur across race and how they jeopardize interactions in education, health care and employment.

Sue edited another recent book, *Microaggressions and Marginality*, featuring contributions from a number of his former students. That book takes on selected topics—for

instance, how black students experience microaggressions in predominantly white colleges and whether microaggressions also occur across class lines.

Thus far most work on microaggressions has been qualitative, relying on focus groups and interviews. It is possible, by videotaping a workplace or classroom, to observe microaggressions and measure their frequency, Sue says, but this method has obvious logistical and ethical limitations.

Now, Sue's colleagues, including his former TC student Kevin Nadal, who teaches at CUNY's John Jay College, are developing scales that will make quantitative studies possible. The scales could help assess how well different interventions work. For instance, do people experience fewer microaggressions in a workplace after a new personnel policy or training program has been put in place?

Sue's work has hit a nerve beyond academics. There's a frequently updated blog, unconnected to Sue but that cites him, where people around the world post stories of microaggressions they've experienced or witnessed.

For his part, Sue hopes the students he helps train come away with a few core insights:

"First, that awareness of their own worldview, as racial-cultural beings, becomes very important," he says. "Second, that they become increasingly aware of the worldviews of people who differ from them. The third component is an ability to develop culturally appropriate intervention, education, managerial styles."

For Kim Baranowski, a doctoral student in counseling psychology who plans to do community-based work along the United States–Mexico border, receiving this sort of training is imperative.

"It's not an add-on," Baranowski says. "There is potential for our field to be culturally destructive. Dr. Sue really serves as a model, in terms of being self-critical, to own our role and our responsibility for our clients and our communities."

Sue doesn't think of himself as a radical, though he knows many see him that way. In the doctoral seminar he shows an angry email he received from someone who called him "a complete bigot and idiot." In California he and his family experienced police harassment after leading organizing efforts in their town. "The forces that confront us are powerful," he says.

Nadal, his student turned colleague, says Sue's fearlessness makes him an even more inspiring mentor.

"I've been able to model after him how to deal with naysayers," Nadal says. "In order to get the message across and have these very important issues brought to the forefront, there have to be some people who take these risks." **TC**



BACKSTAGE  
*at the*  
Human

by JOE LEVINE

Karen Froud  
is using  
EEG technology  
to understand  
how brain  
differences  
shape behavior

# Drama

*Photography by* HEATHER VAN UXEM LEWIS

**In** 2010, while visiting Southeast Asia, Karen Froud had her left forearm tattooed—in Cambodian—with the words “With our minds, we make the world.”

For Froud, Director of Teachers College’s Neurocognition of Language Lab, the tattoo does more than complement an edgy look that includes hennaed hair and a wardrobe that tends toward black. She interprets the ancient Buddhist adage literally: The brain—that three-pound lump of 100 billion cells—shapes all our experiences.

“Looking at behavior alone tells us only a fraction of what’s really going on,” says Froud, Associate Professor for the programs in Speech–Language Pathology and Neuroscience and Education. “Observable behavior is the end result of many, many processes that happen behind the scenes. Behavior can look very similar from one person to the next, but when we look at what the brain is doing, that’s where we see differences.”

Froud and her students use brain-imaging technologies to look “behind the scenes” in children with speech disorders, adults who are learning to read, people who speak multiple languages and even long-time practitioners of meditation. Their work has ranged from research on language processing to studies of the brain systems used for thought and conceptual understanding.

“When we look at children who have speech disorders, looking at the brain instead of behavior could help us identify more accurately whether they have problems with motor planning or with some linguistic aspects of speech production or perception,” Froud says. “When we look at adults who are just learning to read and who find it hard to hang on to that skill, looking at the brain instead of behavior enables us to begin seeing what is different about how their brains handle reading. Maybe one day we can use that knowledge to develop more effective teaching approaches.”

Indeed, such points of difference in brain function can now be identified with much the same precision as variations in human genes—and could someday be just as useful in developing effective therapeutic interventions.

Several years ago, for example, Froud conducted an experiment in which she examined the brain function of people with schizophrenia while they performed simple tasks involving language. While their brain activity was being recorded, participants listened to a spoken word and then were shown another word on a screen. Their task was to decide if the word on screen was an actual word or simply

a nonsensical string of letters. People with no neurological disorder can make such determinations more quickly if the word they hear (say, *hospital*) is related to the word they see (“doctor”)—a process called priming.

In Froud’s study, the participants with schizophrenia, who were high-functioning, stable people on medication, behaved just like those with no neurological problems. They completed tasks well and showed a priming effect. But using a technology called magnetoencephalography (MEG), Froud saw that their brains were not processing information typically. MEG records magnetic fields associated with the electricity generated by brain cells as they communicate with one another. In most people, word-rec-



“We can look at *the temporal unfolding of word recognition, or syntactic structure building, or almost any cognitive process.*”

— KAREN FROUD

ognition tasks elicit a very specific magnetic field, a kind of neural signature. But in the people with schizophrenia, that signature was distorted or absent, or other unexpected responses were occurring in different parts of the brain. For Froud and her team, these changes indicated that basic brain operations are disrupted and disorganized by disorders such as schizophrenia, even when the behavior of affected individuals appears normal.

No one has yet devised a targeted therapy for complex problems like these, but Froud definitely has some ideas. One afternoon a few years after completing the schizophrenia study, she hosted three Buddhist monks from Thailand in her lab. Other researchers had previously observed that meditation increases the organization, or coherence, of activations in different brain regions, and Froud was keen to witness the phenomenon herself.

“We did some simple sensory experiments, recording brain data while the monks listened to sounds, before, during and after meditation,” she says. In two of the monks, who were younger and had practiced meditation for about 15 years, the effects were unsurprising: very typical brain activations before meditation that became much more coherent and organized during meditation. Afterward, a residual coherence could still be seen, although to a lesser extent.

But when Froud tested the third monk, who was a Rinpoche, or lama-like elder, the results were so striking she thought at first her lab equipment was malfunctioning. “The brain data looked extremely organized—unusually so—all the time,” she says. “When I asked the Rinpoche how that could be, he told me he was always meditating, even when he was speaking to me.”

Since then, Froud has been mulling over possible therapeutic effects of meditation for people with various neurological disorders. This spring, she’ll begin a study of cognitive processing in people who are experienced meditators versus those who are novices at the discipline.

## A POINT OF CONVERGENCE

TO THE LAY EYE, THE SPIKY GRAPHS GENERATED BY THE 128-channel electroencephalography machine housed in Froud’s lab on the 11th floor of Thorndike Hall aren’t nearly as exciting or interesting as the pictures of brains produced by technologies such as fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging) and PET (positron emission tomography). With those tools (and some hefty computerized enhancements) you can look into someone’s brain and see just where activations are occurring. Yet EEG-derived information is often much more useful, because it tells you *when* those activations are occurring. It can pinpoint to within milliseconds the brain’s response to a specific stimulus and then follow the processing of that response in real time. “We can look at the temporal unfolding of word recognition, or syntactic structure building, or almost any cognitive process,” says Froud.

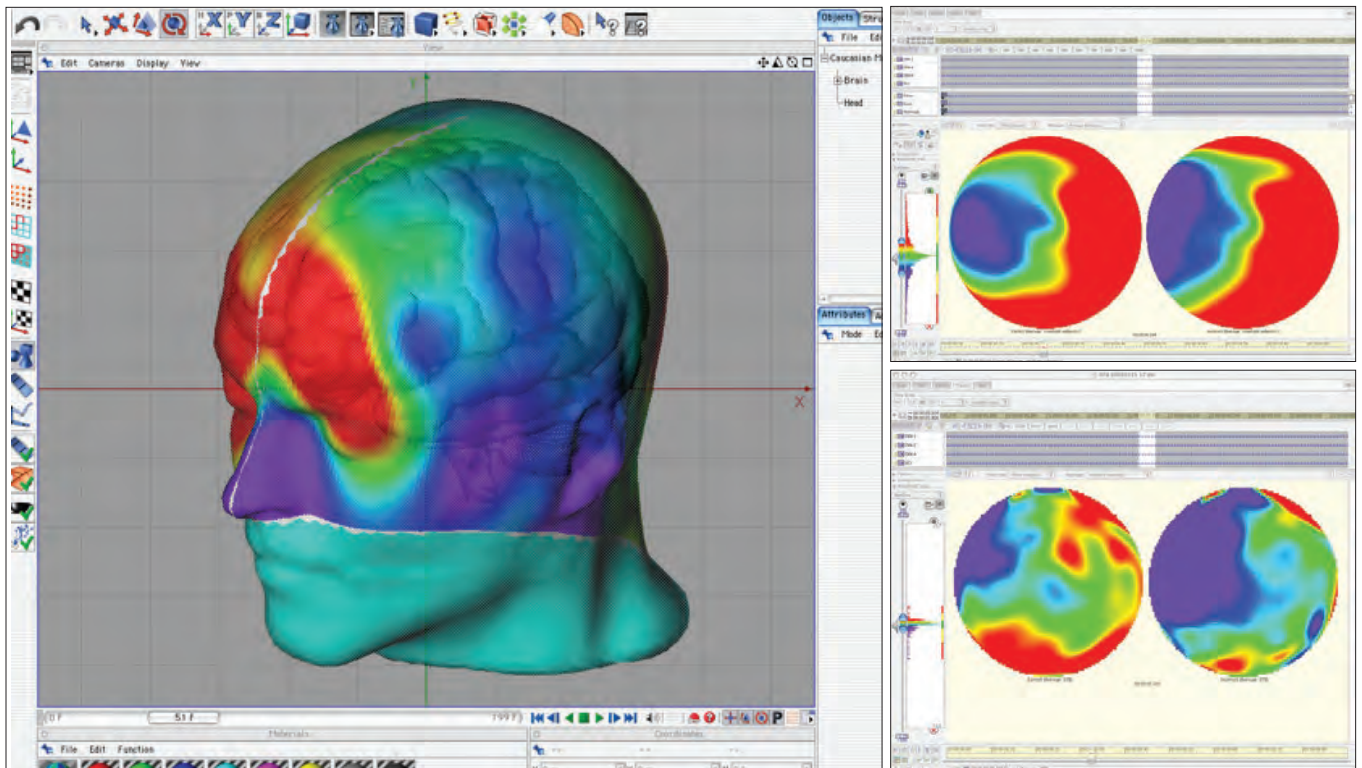
Froud uses fMRI, too, and by combining different imaging modalities has been able to create a multilayered understanding of how activity in different brain regions unfolds over time, more akin to a flow chart of symphonic interaction than to a static portrait.

“For us, it’s about understanding the intersection of timing, localization, concentrations of neurotransmitters [chemicals the brain uses as signal conductors] and the interactions of multiple systems,” she says. “What’s so wonderful about the technology is that we can look at the brain and say, ‘What’s behind this behavior?’ rather than having to work backward from external observations, as earlier scientists like Thorndike and Dewey did.”

Froud’s own career trajectory reflects a shift from looking at outward behavior to focusing on brain function. She worked as a speech/language therapist in London, treating patients who were recovering from traumatic brain injuries



**MAKING WAVES** Electroencephalography records electric impulses released by brain cells in response to external stimuli. Top left: Froud has collaborated with Reem Khamis-Dakwar (left) and Chaille Maddox to explore brain function in people who speak multiple languages and to better understand thought itself.



**LOOKING BEHIND THE SCENES** Above: A rendering of a scalp-recorded EEG, taken while the subject was completing a visual processing task and superimposed on a 3-D brain model. Top right: The brain response of native speakers of Chinese to grammatical and ungrammatical English sentences. Bottom right: A rendering of a scalp-recorded EEG in a grammaticality processing task. The circle on the left is the map of activation recorded when this individual is read grammatical sentences. The circle on the right is the activation associated with ungrammatical sentences. IMAGES COURTESY NEUROCOGNITION OF LANGUAGE LAB

or emerging from comas, and then studied linguistics at University College London. It was her postdoctoral training, in London and then at MIT, that afforded her an opportunity to acquire hands-on skills in neuroscience. Perhaps because she discovered technology via that circuitous path, she understands both its allure and its application for people working in other disciplines.

In recent years Froud has worked with George Bonanno, a clinical psychologist looking for brain markers that might predict which people are at risk for suffering prolonged grief after a bereavement (see story on page 40); Sami Boudelaa and Reem Khamis-Dakwar, Arab linguists working on understanding the cognitive representation of different Arabic language varieties; John Black, who directs TC's Cognitive Science program, and his doctoral student, Chaille Maddox, to understand different modes of nonlinguistic reasoning; and Laura Sánchez and Paula García, doctoral students from Colombia and the Dominican Republic, respectively, to understand second-language acquisition processes.

"Karen is very open to allowing all of us to pursue the questions we're interested in," says Khamis-Dakwar, who earned her Ph.D. in Speech-Language Pathology at TC in 2007 and is now Assistant Professor of Communication

Science and Disorders at Adelphi University. Khamis-Dakwar, who is a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship, is collaborating with Froud to study Arabic diglossia, or linguistic duality. In Palestinian communities, as in most other Arabic countries, people speak an Arabic dialect while writing in Modern Standard Arabic. This has led to clashes over approaches to teaching, sometimes with political overtones.

"There was so much resistance to studying this diglossic situation, and many were even accused of taking a Westerner's viewpoint just by discussing it," Khamis-Dakwar says. "Some researchers have argued that diglossia is the cause of all our literacy problems, claiming, 'This is the reason why Arabs don't like to read.' Personally, I am interested in studying this unique situation, and at the same time I want to keep Standard Arabic and the rich access it provides to all the different Arabic-speaking communities and cultures."

But there is no question that diglossia creates unique challenges for children as they learn, particularly, Khamis-Dakwar says, in an educational system that is mainly trying to mimic educational practices developed for children who live in non-diglossic communities. For Froud and Khamis-Dakwar, the issue is not to be "for" or "against" but simply to understand those challenges for what they



are and to help create more effective methods for teaching Arabic as both a first and a second language.

To that end, the two have examined brain responses of Arabic-speaking participants listening to diglossic code-switching—that is, alternations between colloquial Palestinian dialect and Modern Standard Arabic within single sentences. “This study was based on findings from previous work that showed that the brain responds differently to code switches between English and Spanish—such as hearing the sentence ‘I knocked on the *puerta*’ instead of ‘I knocked on the door’—compared with hearing an unexpected word in English, like ‘I knocked on the entrance,’” Khamis-Dakwar explains.

“If Arabic dialects are really just register variations of Modern Standard Arabic, then we would expect to see one kind of brain response to diglossic code-switching in our study,” she says. “But if the dialect really functions as a separate language system, then we’d see a different signature.”

They did, in fact, see a pattern of activation that suggests that Arab dialects are handled in the brain as distinct systems. While the finding has perhaps not rocked the Arab world, it has, in a quiet way, begun to change some thinking. At least one prominent university faculty member in the Mideast has told Khamis-Dakwar he now plans to teach colloquial Arabic before Standard.

“We’ve been able to take some of the political noise out of the situation,” she says.

Meanwhile, she adds, the findings have potential application in the United States, where many African-American children who speak a vernacular English at home run into problems in classrooms where the lingua franca is Standard English. “If we can incorporate studies of these two situations [Arabic diglossia and African-American Vernacular English speakers in the U.S.] and understand the representation of these systems in the brains of these children, we could devise better strategies to help them transition more successfully from their home language environment to their school language environment,” Khamis-Dakwar says.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

IN RELATED RESEARCH, CHAILLE MADDOX, A PSYCHOLOGY Ph.D. student working with Froud, has been exploring a different kind of cognitive dualism: the mind’s ability to reason using, on the one hand, abstract representations and logical rules, and on the other, sense-based perceptions.

“Psychologists and philosophers both say that when we think, we manipulate an incoming stimulus by creating a mental representation of it,” says Maddox. “In one view of how we do that, the content is made symbolic, unrelated to our senses, and we process it by applying rules. But another view of reasoning remains based in our senses. We take something visual, for example, and we build associations. We see round things rolling and bouncing, and we infer that other round things do that too.”

Since ancient Greek times, Maddox says, there’s been a bias in favor of symbolic reasoning, the notion “that symbolic, logical reasoning is superior because it involves language, and language is what separates us from other animals.” So Maddox designed a series of experiments that “take language out of the picture.” Participants were shown on-screen images of, say, four interlocking gears in motion. They were trained to predict the direction of motion for a fifth gear, either by forming a sensory representation (visualizing the sequence of directional changes as the gear teeth engage) or by applying an abstract rule (odd-numbered gears in a sequence turn clockwise, even-numbered gears turn counterclockwise).

Maddox predicted distinct neural signatures for the different reasoning approaches, and that’s exactly what the EEG recordings showed. Responses in the brains of participants using the first approach were consistent with forming associations among visual/spatial perceptions, whereas the second approach elicited brain responses consistent with the abstract representation of rule-governed processes.

The results are significant for several reasons. First, they strongly suggest that these specific neural signatures, which until now have been understood mainly as indicators of language processing, are also evidence of broader cognitive processes, a finding that could pave the way for new areas of research. For example, the discovery of distinct neural signatures for different modes of reasoning could provide a way to validate teaching practices such as the use of math manipulatives and other hands-on methods that help establish relationships between numbers and formulas and the quantities and processes they represent.

In the longer term, much to the delight of cognitive psychologist John Black—Maddox’s adviser and a longtime supporter of Froud’s work—the findings could shed new light on the teaching potential of iPads and other technology that provides people with learning experiences rooted in touch, vision and hearing.

For Froud, the findings also underscore the value of collaboration itself. “Neuroscience isn’t something you can or should do by yourself,” she says. “Working at TC has broadened my experience in a way that no other institution could. Only here would I have the opportunity to collaborate with so many different people and study such a range of phenomena and behaviors, and to think about it all in the framework of what’s actually going on in society. It’s a constant reminder that one day what we’re doing could make a difference in how we treat a particular disorder or help people learn more easily, or enhance our understanding of other cultures. It’s our joy and privilege to have that as our cornerstone.

“We can’t get upset when our hypotheses are wrong or our understanding is partial,” she adds. “We just have to keep going. My doctoral adviser used to tell me, ‘You’ll never be right; the best you can hope for is to be wrong in interesting and useful ways.’ I find that reassuring.” **TC**

# *The New Face of* Sadness

George Bonanno  
has redefined our thinking about  
grief and resilience

*by* JOE LEVINE

*Photography by* SAMANTHA ISOM





THESE IMAGES ARE INDELIBLE—THEY’LL BE WITH US ALL OUR LIVES.” ¶ GEORGE BONANNO, a TC psychologist and perhaps the world’s most visible expert on resilience to grief and trauma, is speaking in the College’s Milbank Chapel on the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Soon people will stand to speak the names of family and friends who died in the attacks, but Bonanno, 55, a slim man with boyish good looks and an air of bemused gentleness, pulls no punches. He takes the audience through that day’s most horrific scenes. The trapped people gesturing from 100th-floor windows; the towers enveloped in smoke and

flame; rescue workers picking through smoking ruins.

The screen goes blank, and Bonanno begins to talk about what we have learned from 9/11. One lesson is certainly that bad things happen. “Most of the world knew it, but there was a sense in the U. S. that we were invulnerable.” Another, without a doubt, is that disasters cause serious harm, both physical and psychological.

Yet 9/11 also confirmed that most people can cope with even the most harrowing circumstances. In a study of some 2,700 New Yorkers published by Bonanno and other researchers six months after the attacks, more than two-thirds of those interviewed showed virtually no sign of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Across racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines, the prevalence of resilience was more than 50 percent and never fell below one-third, even in people who had been inside the towers, sustained physical injury or seen friends die.

The Milbank audience murmurs its surprise, but Bonanno isn’t finished. He shows a graph with three lines on it. One, labeled “chronic grief,” starts high on the graph and stays there. Another, labeled “recovery,” starts equally high but makes its way downward in fits and starts. The third, labeled “resilience,” begins low, drops sharply and quickly levels out to near flatness.

Until recently, Bonanno says, most experts believed that normal grieving looked like the “recovery” graph, a process conducted in stages, requiring hard work by the bereaved person to reach a “successful” resolution. But the experts were wrong. He and others have shown that that nearly level line represents most people’s reactions to adverse events, ranging from personal loss to witnessing violent trauma.

“The resilient response predominates,” Bonanno says. “We’re stronger than we realized.”

## A MAN FOR HIS TIME

EVERY AGE HAS ITS DISASTERS, BUT THE 21ST CENTURY SEEMS to have arrived with biblical ferocity: 9/11; SARS; hurricane Katrina; the tsunami in Southeast Asia; the triple disaster in Japan. In this scary new world, George Bonanno seems to be the man most called upon to respond to the question, “how’re we doin’?” He has written for *Newsweek* on the en-

durance of the Japanese; appeared on CNN after the Chilean miners were rescued; opined in *The Boston Globe* on the psychological prospects of Katrina survivors. His breakout 2009 book, *The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us About Life After Loss*, was reviewed in *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*.

In studies running the gamut from children with AIDS to survivors of oil rig disasters, Bonanno’s message—that, for the most part, we can handle it—has been “a game changer,” as Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert declares on the cover of *The Other Side of Sadness*, showing that “most of what we thought we knew is just plain wrong.”

“Sadness and fear aren’t accidental by-products—they are evolved responses with highly adaptive functions,” Bonanno told me this fall over lunch at his favorite Korean restaurant. He has a fondness for things Asian, from vaguely Nehru-style jackets to Buddhism and Chinese ancestor rites. “Sadness draws our attention inward and allows us to temporarily tune the world out. Our heart rate slows, we take stock and recalibrate. We’ve lost something—someone—and we can’t use them anymore to regulate ourselves.” He put down his chopsticks and leaned forward to emphasize his point. “Throughout the day I see things that I imagine telling my wife. If she died, I would edit that impulse over time. And it wouldn’t be about simply accepting that she was gone—it’s an actual reconfiguring of the brain. You know the expression ‘sadder but wiser’? That’s really what it means.”

Sadness also cues other people to our needs, eliciting their sympathy and, often, their help. “I’ve always found room for optimism in these observations,” Bonanno writes in *The Other Side of Sadness*. “Sure, we can list the horrors humans have inflicted on each other... But it’s a hopeful sign that we seem to be wired, from the cradle to the grave, to respond with sympathy when others suffer.”

Still, Bonanno is no feel-good pop psychologist. His ideas, he says, are simply the result of applying standard psychological methods to assumptions that, oddly, no one had previously tested. Take the notion that grieving occurs in stages, which has grown out of Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’s model for how terminally ill people accept the inevitability of their own

death. If that idea is accurate—if grief immediately after losing a loved one is the all-engulfing experience assumed by many experts and therapists—then people in its earliest stages should be incapable of smiling or laughter. Yet Bonanno has shown that's not the case. He and his students have videotaped and transcribed interviews with thousands of recently bereaved people or people exposed to violent trauma; compared their descriptions of those experiences to how they talked about other life events; and analyzed their facial expressions and measured their heart rates, blood pressure and other nervous system activity while they spoke.

The focus on facial expression is critical, because the face does not lie. When a person flashes a genuine smile, certain eye muscles come into play, a phenomenon identified by 19th-century physician Guillaume Duchenne. By coding interviews for Duchenne smiling, Bonanno has demonstrated not only that laughter and smiling are normal even in the days immediately following loss, but also that recently bereaved people who display “context sensitivity”—that is, who can smile or laugh at something funny or pleasurable and look sad in response to something that is, in fact, sad—resume normal functioning sooner and prove more resilient long term.

#### LOSS LEADER

Bonanno with Sondra Singer Beaulieu, who reports that “visits” from her late husband helped her come to terms with his death.



In fact, Bonanno asserts, grieving, for most of us, is an “oscillation,” in which overwhelming sadness alternates with other, more everyday emotions. Freud’s notion of “grief work”—an exhaustive process of reliving memories in order to shed them—is misguided, because it can only imprint memory more deeply. There is no such thing as “insufficient mourning,” “failure to mourn,” or “delayed grief,” and maintaining an emotional connection with the dead can be beneficial.

One woman he describes, a journalist named Sondra Singer Beaulieu, reports being visited repeatedly by her late husband, Serge. The couple had been work partners, and Sondra initially struggled with guilt over her inability to finish Serge’s projects and carry on his legacy. One night “she woke up and saw Serge standing in the bedroom doorway... She

was left with a lingering conviction that Serge had visited her to assess the situation.”

After a second such “visit,” Sondra wrote, in a personal essay, “I sensed that Serge was telling me that he was in this extraordinary, tranquil place and that he was all right. He had no worries about what was happening here, and no matter what I was able to do—or not do—it was all right.”

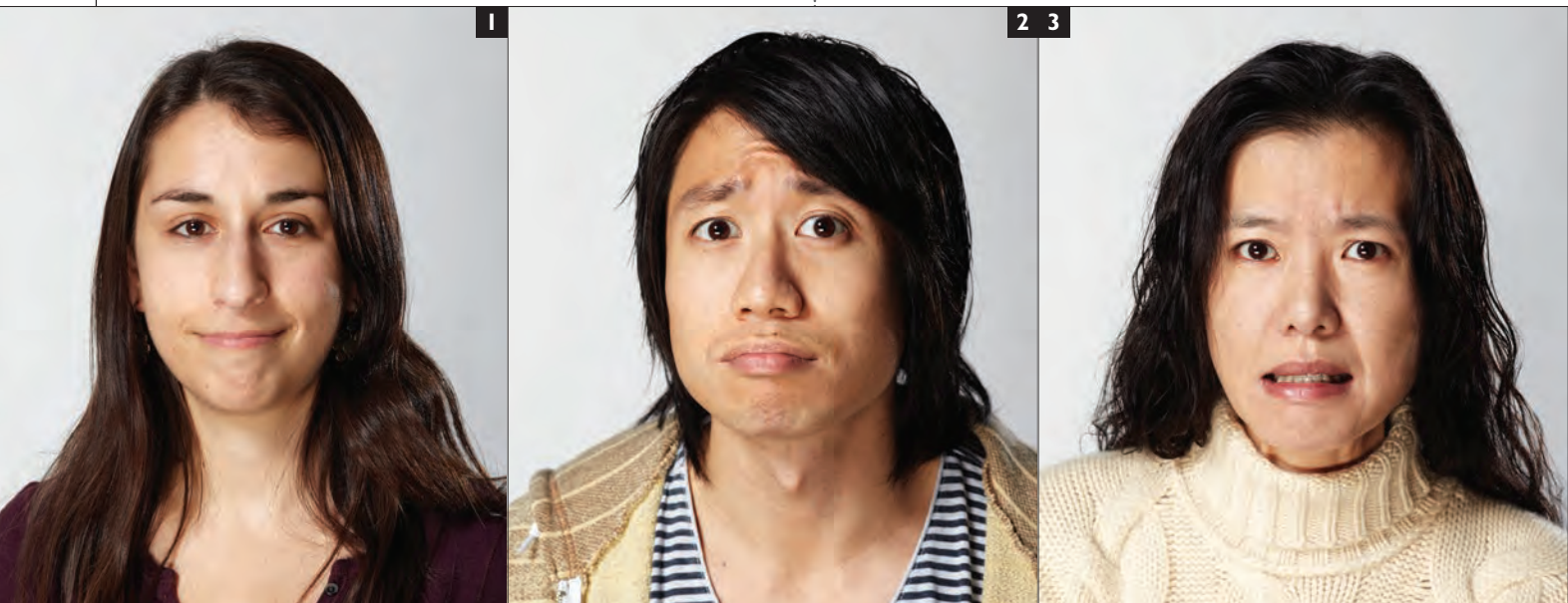
“Throughout the day I see things that I imagine telling my wife. If she died, **I WOULD EDIT THAT IMPULSE OVERTIME.** And it wouldn’t be about simply accepting that she was gone—**IT’S AN ACTUAL RECONFIGURING OF THE BRAIN.**”

From “a traditional perspective,” Bonanno writes, Sondra’s “quasi-hallucinatory exchanges with Serge could only mean trouble.” Conventional wisdom would hold that she was “using the enduring bond as some sort of fantasy experience to mask a deeper pain.” But Bonanno pronounces Sondra “unquestionably resilient,” informing us that she “basked in old friendships and began new ones... resumed her writing career” and, in general, “continued to live a rewarding and productive life.” Nor, he tells us, is her experience uncommon. Recent studies have found that most people who have lost loved ones

and that the ability to communicate emotional nuance is a vital human function. Bonanno and Keltner became frequent research collaborators, with grief and resilience as their focus.

“There seemed to be so much we could do, so many angles to explore,” Bonanno writes. “Almost nothing was known about how emotion worked during bereavement, and there were so many questions.”

But on a personal level, Bonanno’s deepening involvement with bereavement can be seen as part of a larger odyssey. He grew up in suburban Chicago as the oddball in a family of nonintellectuals—a reader, painter and musician,



feel watched over by them in some way. About one-third report talking regularly with the person they have lost, and some sense the dead person’s presence. The question of what’s real is largely irrelevant.

“It feels as if I’m with him when we talk,” says another woman profiled in Bonanno’s book. “That’s all that matters.”

## THE TRACKS OF HIS TEARS

BONANNO’S OWN EDUCATION ABOUT SADNESS—AND EMOTIONS in general—seems to have unfolded on two tracks.

In his professional life, serendipity played a large role. After finishing graduate school, he was offered a job at the University of California, San Francisco, running some studies on bereavement. The topic seemed “a little creepy,” he says, “but I had just gotten married, San Francisco seemed like a nice place to be, and I was offered carte blanche to run the trials however I wanted.”

In San Francisco, Bonanno met a young psychologist, Dacher Keltner, and Keltner’s mentor, Paul Ekman, whose pioneering work demonstrated that, far from being some vestigial annoyance, emotions are varied, complex and useful,

but also a rebel who hung out with troublemakers and barely finished high school.

He feuded with his father, a man with no formal education who had worked his way up to become head of Midwest distribution for Eastman Kodak. Profoundly insecure in his high-powered job, the elder Bonanno worked too hard, was chronically depressed and suffered a series of heart attacks that began when he was 43.

Tensions between father and son came to a head when Bonanno left home at 17.

“My dad had always wanted to travel, but couldn’t because he had to take care of his parents, who were immigrants,” Bonanno says. “My leaving was partly a result of intuiting that desire. He forbade me to do it, but I left anyway.”

Bonanno went out West, played music, worked as a sign painter and fruit picker, and stumbled into the mental

**FACE VALUES** Bonanno’s students (from left: Jenny Lotterman, Oscar Yan and Zhuo-ying Zhu) model expressions they code for in studies of the bereaved.

- 1 a fake, polite smile
- 2 anger
- 3 false anger
- 4 genuine “Duchenne” smile
- 5 disgust
- 6 genuine “Duchenne” smile

health field when he was hired as a handyman by a group home in Boulder, Colorado, that offered juvenile offenders an alternative to jail.

“I found it easy to talk to the kids—I had long hair. The counselors decided to assign kids to me when they broke something, and soon I had a whole group of kids working with me.”

He followed that experience with a series of similar jobs—recreation director at an old age home; building a sheep barn with mentally handicapped adults—and thought about becoming a psychologist, but worried he was too old to go back to school.

“I have, in fact, periodically engaged in something of a continued relationship with my father,” he writes. “As I grew older, I found myself having conversations with him—much to my amazement.” The first exchange took place while Bonanno was in graduate school at Yale. He was aware of wanting his father to know that he had turned out OK; that he held nothing against him. “I wanted so much to speak with him, to tell him these things. Then one day, while walking down a quiet street at dusk, I did... I looked around to double-check: Nobody was there; nobody was watching me. I spoke at a normal conversational level. ‘Hello, Dad,’ I began,



And then his father died, the rift between them unhealed. “I didn’t grieve a lot when it happened,” Bonanno says, “though I had thought I would—I knew that he was in bad health and would die prematurely. But instead, what I really felt was relief. I realized his death freed him from the suffering he’d gone through.”

It freed Bonanno, too. Two years later, at 26, he enrolled at the University of Massachusetts. After a year, he argued his way into a scholarship at nearby Hampshire College, where the classes were smaller, and went on to earn a Ph.D. at Yale.

“My life opened up,” he writes in *The Other Side of Sadness*. “I had been acting out a kind of duet with my father under bright lights in the center of the stage. The rest of the theater was dark. I could not see the faces in the audience. When my father died, it was if the house lights had come on. To my surprise, I found that the theater was empty. Not only was I the only one left on the stage, but I was the only person in the entire theater. I had been acting out a play by myself. I could have stopped at any point, but I hadn’t known it.”

And yet, though he didn’t grieve, Bonanno continued to work out the nuances of his past.

and then I paused. I didn’t hear anything, but I felt my father’s presence. It was warm and comforting.”

## THE OTHER 15 PERCENT

THIS PAST SEPTEMBER, BONANNO RECEIVED A GRANT OF JUST under \$3 million from the National Institutes of Health to try to tease out the factors that, in about 10 percent of the population, result in prolonged grief (PG). People with this condition, which is something quite distinct from depression, can become socially isolated, suffer from immune system disorders and lose their ability to work. Some never recover.

To understand who is vulnerable to prolonged grief and why, Bonanno and his students are again videotaping recently bereaved people in their Loss, Trauma and Emotion Lab, a small suite of rooms on the fourth floor of TC’s Horace Mann Hall. In interviews conducted at 2, 14 and 25 months after the loss of a spouse, participants report on their own well-being. They perform certain computer tasks, one of which is viewing pictures with emotional content depicting positive and negative events, after which they are asked to heighten or suppress any expression of emotion. Subsequently they visit the

lab of TC professor Karen Froud (see story on page 34) to undergo an electroencephalogram (EEG), a test that can detect electrical energy spikes in the brain that occur within fractions of a second after an emotional prompt, such as a sad image.

The study seeks to validate a number of Bonanno's working hypotheses about emotional resilience. Does context sensitivity—being able to respond to different kinds of emotional prompts with appropriate facial expressions—really predict a better recovery from loss? Is there a distinctive pattern of brain response in people with PG—a biological marker that can predict who is most at risk? Identifying such correlations would help create an earlier, more consistent diagnosis, and perhaps also convince a skeptical medical establishment (and insurance industry) that PG is a bona fide condition with serious consequences.

But are there treatments that could help? There is no pill or simple codified procedure, but successful approaches have centered on understanding “those aspects of the loss or the lost relationship that most haunt the bereaved survivor,” Bonanno writes.

A therapist can help a patient see the fallacies in narratives of guilt and regret and also “develop concrete goals to begin moving back toward a normal life.”

Yet for Bonanno, culture may be the most profound mediator of grief. In his view, Western culture (primarily that of Europe and North America) tends to overvalue the feelings of individuals, while “people in non-Western cultures... care more about the interactions between people than about what is going on in any one person's head.” For them, bereavement “is less about sadness and grief and more about what people do, whether they behave the way mourning people are supposed to behave.”

The ritualized forms of mourning that exist in many non-Western nations have a transformative power, strengthening community and family bonds. At the end of *The Other Side of Sadness*, Bonanno describes a trip he took in 2004 to China, where he had studied bereavement ritual extensively. Walking through Shau Kei Wan village on Hong Kong Island, he finally decides, after much hesitation, to observe the ancient tradition of burning a paper offering to his father. The choice of what, specifically, to burn seems momentous, until, watching his young daughter become entranced by shiny paper goods in a store, he hits upon the perfect solution: paper gold bullion.

“My father had worked hard all his life... so that his family could have a better life, and he had denied himself material pleasures... Gold was rock solid. This was something my father could rely on; this would make him feel safe, allow him to breathe a little easier... And then I

## From Distressed Debt to Just Plain Distress

Erica Diminich, a second-year doctoral student and teaching assistant who helps run George Bonanno's Loss, Trauma and Emotion Lab, was working at Lehman Brothers on Wall Street when the planes hit the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. Soon afterward, she decided she'd had enough of distressed debt and enrolled at New York University to complete her undergraduate degree. While taking a course called “Death, Dying and Bereavement,” she came across research by Bonanno, switched majors to psychology and, after graduation, applied to Teachers College in hopes of studying with him.

“In the past, people had been deemed pathological if they suffered a traumatic event and then did well, but George was saying something different,” Diminich explains. “That intrigued me.”

Nowadays, Diminich spends much of her time in Bonanno's lab coding the facial expressions of people who have lost a spouse; she is currently working on coding video footage of individuals who witnessed the 9/11 attacks. “George is a great person to work with because he gets so excited about the research,” she says. “If you tell him you're interested in exploring a particular aspect of things, he gets on board and says go for it. That's what graduate school should be all about.”



realized that thinking about my father this way was the whole point. The insight was exhilarating.”

Completing the ritual, Bonanno felt something shift in his communion with his father.

“The words I had spoken were surprisingly forceful, as if I had summoned some great power... When I had spoken with my father previously, I had always imagined him alone. In the Man Mo Temple, I saw him in a world full of other people. Whatever my father was—a spirit, a memory, a cluster of neurons activated in my brain, a vague opening in the cosmos—it just didn't matter. All that I cared about at that moment was that I felt deeply and immutably bonded with him...”

“Then it struck me...like a thunderbolt...I was reaching out to my father from a temple in China... In the context of my relationship with my father, it was enormous. My father had given up his desire to travel so that he could support his family. I had defiantly left home...with the irrepressible intent to do just the opposite. This issue had torn us asunder; now it was the ground on which we were coming together.

“This was the best offering I could have hoped for.

“Before I knew it, the words came out of my mouth: ‘Ni hao, Dad.’ I couldn't speak Chinese, but I knew how to say hello.”

TC

View an interview with Bonanno and read the writings of Sonda Singer Beaulieu at <http://bit.ly/se8jt1>



# WHAT'S A *Mother To Do?*

Suniya Luthar explores the stresses of society's toughest job

by BARBARA FINKELSTEIN

**A**LL ROADS LEAD TO MOM. PSYCHOLOGISTS from Sigmund Freud (see “Oedipus complex”) to Donald Winnicott (the “good enough mother”) have essentially agreed: Mothers, because they typically provide a child’s first bonding experience, can bestow or withhold the love that every human being needs to thrive.

But to whom does Mom turn when she needs a good enough mother?

“The world expects mothers to be pillars of strength,” says Suniya Luthar, Professor of Psychology and Education. “But the stress that comes from making decisions—‘Mom, can I go to a party tonight?’ ‘Mom, do I have to go to religious school?’—depletes you.”

Now Luthar is writing a book tentatively titled *Who Mothers Mommy?*

A clinical and developmental psychologist, Luthar has spent her career looking at the impact of different environments on mothers and families, both affluent and poor. In a five-year study launched in 1998, she tested a radically simple hypothesis: Providing poor, substance-abusing mothers with mothering-like supports could change their behaviors and create better odds for their children. She and her co-investigators randomly assigned one group of women to a Relational Psychotherapy Mothers’ Group (RPMG), led by an empathic therapist who, through role play, encouraged effective parenting and helped the drug-addicted mothers unite in coping with isolation and stress.

A second group of women received conventional methadone treatment plus an “add-on” called recovery training (RT). The approach focused on adopting a drug-free lifestyle, coping with cravings and avoiding triggers (situations that lead to abusing drugs) and other dangers.

At the end of the six-month treatment, the mothers receiving RPMG had more significantly reduced their drug use and were reporting less depression. Their children also reported significant improvements in distress. But six months later, the benefits of RPMG had all but

vanished (and, in two cases, had reversed) while the mothers who had received RT showed moderate gains.

Does that mean that mothering mothers doesn’t work?

To the contrary, Luthar believes the findings strongly validated it—and that withdrawal of a consistent, supportive environment for women who had never previously experienced one may have increased distress. Another possible effect: Mothers receiving RPMG may also have felt newly empowered to believe they could choose their actions and broader roles in life—a glimpse of autonomy that may have created new stresses and discontents.

Luthar turned to the issue of choice in part because of her decadelong research on affluent families. Her studies of that demographic found that teenagers from financially secure families smoked more cigarettes and marijuana, drank more alcohol and used more illicit drugs than their inner-city counterparts. In part, their behaviors resulted from feeling pressure to be academically and professionally successful—but the wealthier teens may also have been better equipped than low-income peers to resist parental discipline.

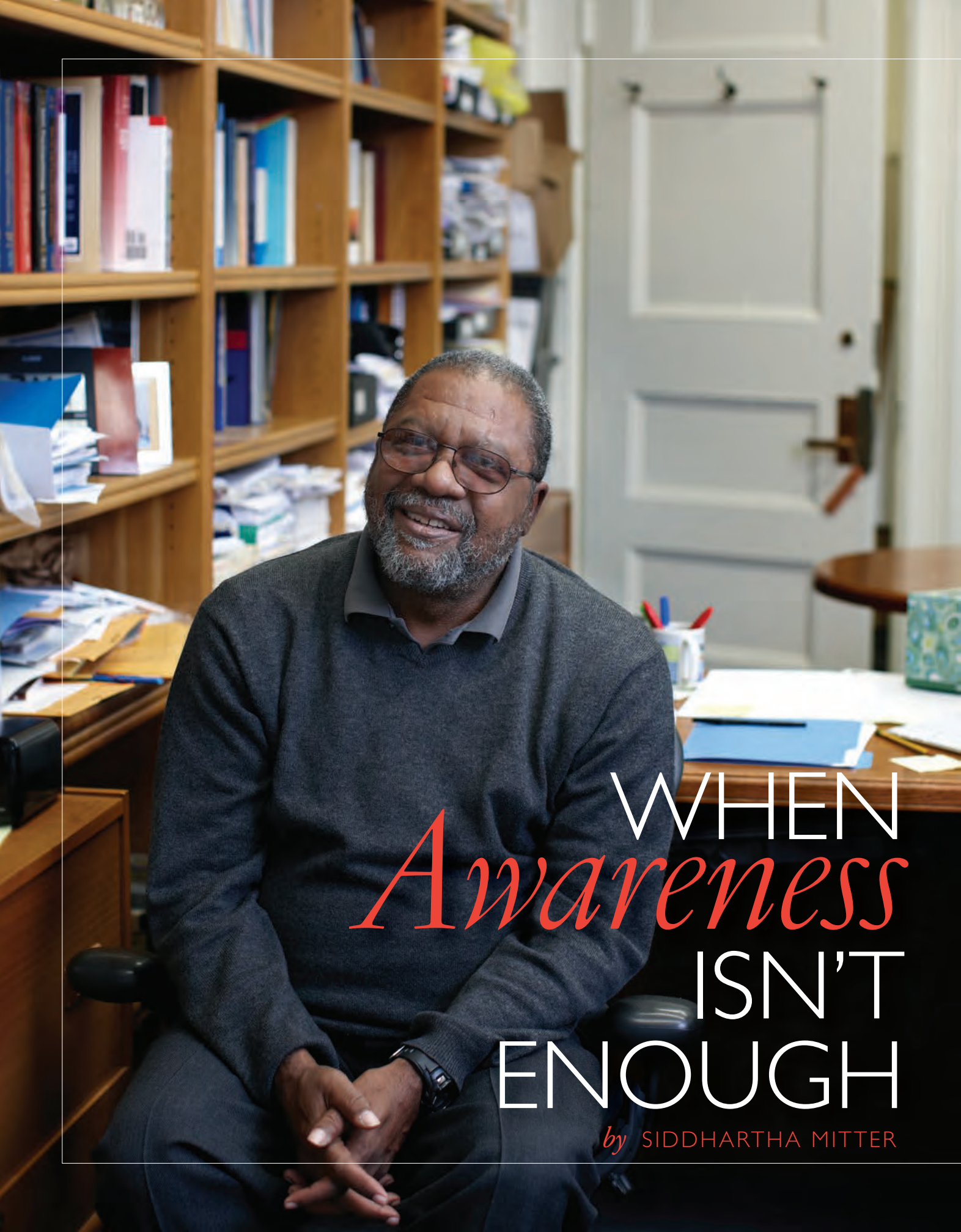
“These kids tend to argue like sophisticated lawyers,” Luthar says. “They lay guilt trips on parents. They come home and say, ‘Mom, everybody’s doing it’—smoking pot, binge-drinking, cheating on tests.” These difficult conversations most often fall to mothers, Luthar says—and when discipline fails, everyone, from policy makers to school principals, tends to blame Mom.

Of course, affluent mothers often do over-emphasize material success, Luthar says—and when they do, they are creating additional stresses in their own lives.

“How often do you hear people celebrating goodness and kindness and connections to people who are authentic?” she asks. “The value in our culture is to get the latest model Lexus, to get your children into Harvard. If you, as a mother, are trying to instill values of kindness and decency, you inevitably come up against this cultural bias.”

The bottom line, Luthar concludes, is, “How can you nurture if you’re not nurtured yourself?”

In *Who Mothers Mommy?*, Luthar hopes to synthesize all her research since the early 1990s. Ultimately, she believes that inner-city and affluent mothers are in the same boat. “We can ask both sets of mothers, ‘Do you feel truly seen and loved for the person you are at your core?’ How many mothers can answer yes?” **TC**



WHEN  
*Awareness*  
ISN'T  
ENOUGH

by SIDDHARTHA MITTER

Most racial discrimination suits fail, and the medical world doesn't acknowledge that discrimination causes harm. Robert T. Carter is trying to change the status quo on both counts

**F**ACT: EIGHTY PERCENT OF LEGAL CLAIMS OF RACIAL harassment or discrimination fail.

To Robert T. Carter, Professor of Psychology and Education, that statistic confirms a belief he has acquired over the course of his long career. "People write that racism is generally a socioeconomic condition," says Carter, an internationally recognized expert on race and diversity issues. "There has not been, until my work, a way to organize encounters into types, with specific relationships to a person's reaction."

Carter has written and conducted research on racial/cultural experiences in schools, workplaces and other settings and has been a consultant and expert witness on such topics as school desegregation, employment discrimination, organizational cultural competence and diversity training. His observations and findings have convinced him that people experience symptoms such as nightmares, depression, withdrawal, guilt and physical ailments in the wake of abrupt or repeated incidents in which they are belittled, dismissed or harmed due to race.

Yet among the 52 examples of stresses listed in the current edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-IV), race is not mentioned and discrimination is noted only once. "Essentially, race and racism don't appear," Carter says.

The situation is similar on the legal side with respect to recognition of emotional distress in cases of racial harassment or racial discrimination. In the case of sexual harassment, Carter notes, "if you're a man, and a woman working for you in your office brings a complaint that you said or did something that made her uncomfortable, she doesn't have to show intent. It's enough, according to the law, that she was uncomfortable, and corrective action could be taken against you. But the law on racial discrimination or harassment—they are not separated or treated as distinct—says that one has to show intent on the basis of race and that the offending actions must have been committed with racial animus."

Nearly every organization has a very clear-cut, unambiguous sexual harassment policy and procedures for dealing with violations, Carter says. Yet with regard to race, "It's just 'We have an antidiscrimination policy.' There are no guidelines on how to file an action for racial harassment."

Carter, who holds an M.A. and an Ed.M. from Teachers College and a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland, says his knowledge of this state of affairs crystallized during a year he spent in 2004 and 2005 working as an Ira Glasser Racial Justice Fellow at the national offices of the American Civil Liberties Union.

"I learned that three amendments to the Constitution were

passed to protect the rights of people of African-American descent—the 13th, 14th, and 15th—and that there have been seven Civil Rights Acts passed, the first in 1866. It's amazing. I hadn't thought there was anything about civil rights enacted until 1964. Some of the provisions of the 1866 Act are still actionable in court. It gives black people the right to sue and to have hostility-free environments. And yet right now you have to go through hell if you bring a claim for racial harassment."

Carter himself has helped lay a foundation for change. In 2007, in an article in *The Counseling Psychologist*, he introduced the concept of "race-based traumatic stress injury," proposing links between forms of racial discrimination and harassment, how they are experienced, and symptoms and behaviors that result. The article poses categories of avoidance or racial discrimination; hostility or racial harassment; aversive-hostility, and discriminatory harassment. "By grouping encounters this way, you can connect acts to a particular set of reactions that determine that you've experienced traumatic stress," Carter says.

"If I come into a store and they follow me around every moment, or if I go into a work setting and people treat me with hostility or talk over me, those are acts of hostile aversion or hostility. But if I am ignored in a store, that is avoidance."

In the same article in *The Counseling Psychologist*, Carter presented a research agenda aimed at creating tools for assessing racial harassment and discrimination and at building a stronger body of evidence on how people are harmed.

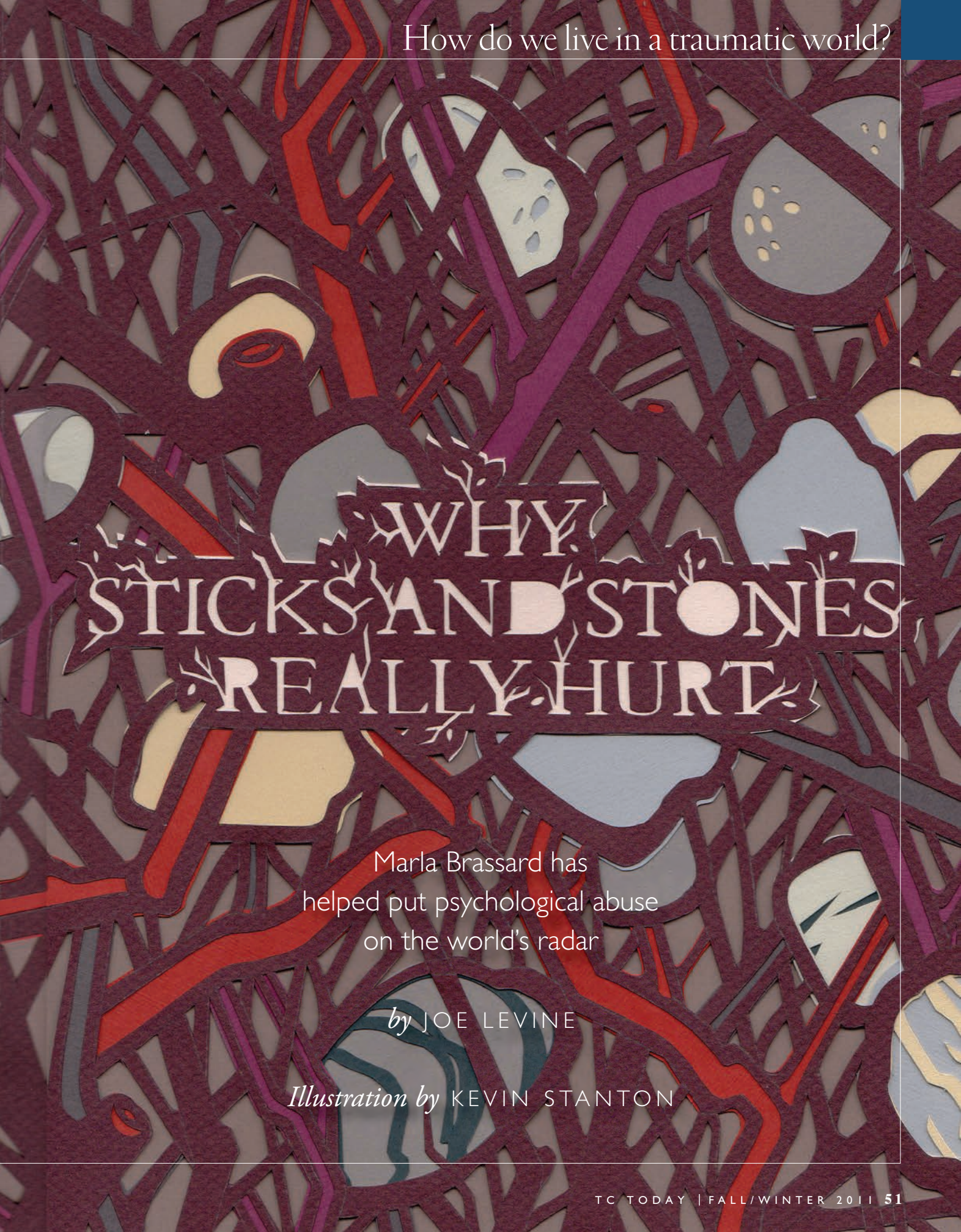
Carter also is working on ways to assess the degree to which an institution's climate encourages diversity. Since he strongly believes that demographics—the proportion of people of color in each professional category, for example—is not enough to predict or prevent a positive or constructive climate for diversity, he wants to build a more comprehensive gauge of the climate for diversity as people actually experience it.

His pilot site is none other than TC itself. Over the past several years, with the College's blessing, he and Celia Oyler, Associate Professor of Education, have used document analysis, an "inventory of artifacts" or visual cues, interviews, focus groups and a survey to assess TC's climate in ways that can apply to other institutions.

While the research is ongoing, Carter points out one key finding, which he says is not specific to TC. "It's true that people, whether they are in the majority or the minority, find issues of race are hard to address," he says. "Generally, there is a sense within institutions that it's the responsibility of the people who are bothered by those issues to raise them and promote change. But that's not effective. Issues with race or diversity are not handled well when they percolate from the bottom. The people who are responsible for an organization need to talk them up." **TC**



How do we live in a traumatic world?



# WHY STICKS AND STONES REALLY HURT

Marla Brassard has  
helped put psychological abuse  
on the world's radar

*by* JOE LEVINE

*Illustration by* KEVIN STANTON

# In

the 1980s, when some superintendents in eastern Canada were phasing out psychological abuse and physical punishment of children in their schools, Marla Brassard ran a series of workshops for teachers in rural towns on nonviolent techniques for managing classrooms.

Initially, the teachers—mostly men who had grown up in the area—“tilted back in their chairs with their arms folded across their chests,” recalls Brassard, Professor of Psychology and Education and coordinator of Teachers College’s doctoral program in school psychology. “They thought I was going to take away the only means they had for maintaining control.” But the floodgates opened when she asked the group about their own student days. Nearly everyone told stories of teachers calling them names, punching them and throwing them against lockers. One man remembered being chained to the leg of a desk.

“There were multiple examples, and they were all legal,” says Brassard.

But for her, the violence was secondary. “What I found really heartbreaking was how few of them could recall anything positive a teacher had done. One guy remembered that his teacher had scribbled ‘Good’ over a section of a paper he’d written. Another said a teacher had once complimented him on his throwing arm. Beyond that, nothing their teachers had done had ever made them feel cared for, valued or competent. So they themselves took little joy in their work, and they had no experience of praising kids, of listening to them or of trying to develop any kind of a relationship with them.”

## LOOKING BELOW THE SURFACE

OVER THE PAST 30 YEARS, Brassard has been among a handful of pioneers in her field to bring global attention to the psychological abuse and neglect of children by parents, teachers and other caregivers. In a career that has ranged from consulting in juvenile death-penalty cases to evaluating sexually abused teens, she has focused on the psychological dynam-

ics that underlie emotionally damaging relationships.

“If you look at the harm from physical abuse, unless it’s very severe, it’s almost all accounted for by psychological abuse,” says Brassard, a tall woman with finely etched features and a warm, energetic manner. “If your dad throws a brick at you and misses, the message is still that he cares so little about you that he would put you at risk. And it’s the same thing with sexual abuse—the idea that a parent or other caregiver would exploit you in that way when you’re avoiding them at all costs and wearing three pairs of pajamas to bed. That’s what screws kids up.”

Beyond cases reported to child protective services and the police, random phone surveys reveal that 90 percent of American parents engage in some form of psychological aggression with their children age 2 and older, and that more severe psychological aggression occurs with about 10 to 20 percent of toddlers

and 50 percent of teens. Children from lower-income families (those earning less than \$30,000 annually) are 13 times more likely to have been abused than those from higher-income families.

The resulting harm is indisputably real. In a study that has followed children in Springfield, Massachusetts, through middle school (funded by the Spencer Foundation) and now into young adulthood (funded by the Beth and Michael Kasser Foundation), Brassard and former doctoral student Kera Donovan found that those subjected to more than one or two instances of verbal aggression by their mothers in a single year have had higher incidences of delinquency, depression, low self-esteem, social isolation and victimization by peers.

Yet psychological abuse remains poorly studied, and there are still people, including those whose work relates directly to children’s well-being, who refuse to recognize its importance.

“We all know what it’s like to be verbally or behaviorally attacked or rejected,” Brassard says. “So people say, ‘Well, yeah, that happened to me, and I turned out fine.’ What people don’t realize, and what we now know from research, is that psychological maltreatment destroys marriages, friendships and parent-child relationships.”

It’s also hard for the state to intervene in a family where psychological abuse is occurring. “You can order someone to stop hitting or sexually abusing their kid, but you can’t really order a parent to change the whole tenor of their relationship with their child.”

## AN UNEXPECTED PATH

BRASSARD DID NOT SET OUT TO STUDY psychological abuse. After earning a Ph.D. in school psychology at TC in 1979, she worked for a year as a school psychologist in Princeton, New Jersey. Then she became an assistant professor in the school psychology program at the University of Utah, where she studied learning-related issues. While there, she was approached by a doctoral student, active in the Junior League, who had set up one of the first respite-care centers for families at risk for abusing their children.

“She asked me to do pro bono assessments of the kids,” Brassard recalls, “and then co-lead therapy groups for sexually abused children.



“IN THE U.S.,  
it’s STILL LEGAL  
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and school personnel  
TO HIT and  
say demeaning  
words to KIDS.”

There was no literature on the subject of sexual abuse; the only two articles you could find in the university library were on incest among aboriginals. So we ended up doing some studies together on child sexual abuse.”

Brassard also began to theorize about why people abuse. “Most of us operate on a two-pronged strategy in relationships,” she says. “The first is positive. As good teachers, parents or friends, we get others to like us by cooperating with them, being fun to be with, pleasing them. We try hard to keep the relationship working because it means a lot to us. The second strategy is about being aggressive and coercive. Everyone needs to be able to defend themselves and those they care about, but some people who have been raised in rejecting or unhappy families with a lot of conflict know only that strategy. They’re one-trick ponies, and many—but not all—end up in coercive cycles, raising their kids the same way their parents raised them.”

In 1983, in part because of her broader understanding of what motivates maltreatment, Brassard was tapped by Stuart Hart, the newly elected President of the National Association of School Psychologists, to co-chair the first (and still the only) international conference on psychological abuse.

“We brought together a group of really influential people from different fields who were in a position to make genuine contributions,” recalls Hart, who is now a professor emeritus at the Indiana University School of Education. “It was really the moment that a field was born—when the people who could make contributions

got together for the first time to go into depth and get to know one another.”

Brassard and Hart subsequently won one of the first federal grants ever awarded for research on psychological abuse and used it to develop a set of operational definitions and quantitative measures. (Their observational measure of psychological maltreatment, for example, can distinguish carefully matched maltreating parents from non-maltreating parents on the basis of just 15 minutes of videotaped parent-child interaction.) They have remained close friends and collaborators ever since.

“Marla has great research skills—she understands the necessary steps to produce empirical data that give you a firm footing to assess

protracted interventions,” says Hart. “She also has great insight into how families work.” These qualities, he adds, together with a genuine kindness toward other people, have made Brassard “the right person at the right time” to advance the field.

In 1995 the definitional framework created by Brassard and Hart became, in revised form, the *Guidelines for Suspected Psychological Maltreatment of Children and Youth* of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children. These guidelines are now widely used around the world by psychologists who have been asked to make evaluations in court cases or create treatment plans. They cover:

- spurning (shaming, ridicule, persistent criticism and punishment, public humiliation);
- exploiting and corrupting (modeling or encouraging inappropriate behaviors, such as prostitution, criminal activity, substance abuse or violence);
- terrorizing (physically harming, endangering or abandoning a child or his/her loved ones or objects);
- isolating (denying opportunities to meet a child’s needs for interaction and communication with others); and
- denying emotional responsiveness, which includes failing to express affection, caring, love or interest in a child.

The last category may be the most damaging of all. For example, in a 1970s study of low-income women in Minneapolis who had recently had their first babies, the average IQ of infants who were fed, clothed and changed without any kind of emotional interaction (hugging, kiss-

ing, cooing) dropped from average levels at age 1 to the equivalent of being nearly mentally retarded at 18 months.

“We’re designed, as a species, to learn about the world in an intensely emotional and social context, and we’re set up to do it with Mom and those close to her in the first year,” Brassard says. “So if you’re just propped up and given a bottle, and touched only when you’re changed and maybe when you’re fed, it’s devastating to your social and emotional development.”

## FIXING THE PROBLEM

HOW CAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE BE STOPPED? For Brassard, the most effective solution would be a cultural change.

“In Western Europe, many countries have outlawed mental injury and corporal punishment by parents and teachers,” she points out. “They also provide social services that reduce the stresses on families, such as prenatal care for poorer women, trained home visitors after the birth of a child or if a family is struggling, and income support for single parents. The countries that first did this, like Sweden, have much lower incidences of abuse and child problems than we do. But here in the U.S., it’s still legal in many states for parents and school personnel to hit and say demeaning words to kids.

“The U.S. and Somalia are the only two countries that haven’t yet ratified the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child, which says that every child has worth and is entitled to respect for their human dignity and protection from psychological and physical forms of abuse,” she continues. There would seem to be little to oppose in such a document, but “it seems to violate our notion of the sanctity of the family.”

Meanwhile, in lieu of a proactive approach, Americans “wait until kids from maltreating and dysfunctional families are broken, and then we try to fix them,” Brassard says. “We have this weird outlook that, when kids are little, abuse is perpetrated by horrible parents—and then suddenly, when kids become teenagers, our perspective flips and the teens are the horrible ones who mistreat their parents and need to be shipped off to group homes.”

Still, there are interventions that can change the dynamics in abusive families. “The most effective parenting programs start by teaching parents how to read a child’s emotional signals, show love and be caring toward their kids,” Brassard says. “That has to come first, because in abusive homes, the kids and parents may hate each other, even if there’s still a bond between them. So the parent has to learn to pay attention to the child and to the child’s interests, and only then move on to learning positive and consistent discipline techniques.”



Ultimately, children themselves may offer the most fertile ground for change. “The good news,” Brassard continues, “is that there is an awful lot we can do to intervene at the school experience level. That’s where we can get the biggest intervention bang for our buck. Give children alternative relationships with caring adults—relationships in which they feel cared about, can demonstrate competence and develop a sense of self-efficacy and can learn that others can be trusted. Research shows that these adults can be teachers, especially same-sex, or coaches, school psychologists, lunchroom aides, janitors or adults in the community such as pastors, friends’ parents and other family members.”

In Springfield, where she has conducted her longitudinal study of middle-school children, Brassard interviewed a sixth-grader who was having suicidal thoughts. The girl’s parents were divorced, and her mother, with whom she had been very close, was now working a demanding full-time job.

“The girl was a good student in a gifted-and-talented program, she had friends, she liked her teacher,” Brassard says. “But boys in the class were repeatedly harassing her and other girls, making comments about the size of their breasts and how they would be in bed. She was miserable, and she couldn’t tell her mom.”

Was the mother guilty of abusing or neglecting her daughter? “No,” Brassard says. “But it says how much children need supportive adults in their lives. That’s their whole world.”

TC



Peter Coleman  
combines psychology  
with mathematics and  
other disciplines to  
help implacable foes  
resolve their differences

by PATRICIA LAMIELL

TRYING TO MAKE THE

# *Impossible Possible*

**P**ETER COLEMAN WILL TELL YOU THAT NOTHING motivates him like a good quagmire.

Coleman, Director of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCR) at Teachers College, was once called with his team to a high school in the South Bronx to try to address rampant gang violence that had claimed the lives of three students. They learned in interviews with parents and other community members that the conflict was the result of many inter-related factors, including “miserable housing, drug money, poor health care, even lead paint,” Coleman recalls. Yet for all the crosscurrents and complicated history, each of the warring gangs had reduced the fight to something very simple: The other group was the problem. And the longer the conflict lasted, the more it intensified and spread, causing a feedback loop in which newer flare-ups fed the original one.

Coleman, Associate Professor of Psychology and Education, is one of the world’s leading experts on addressing intractable conflict—entrenched hatreds between individ-

uals, groups and nations that not only fail to resolve but worsen over time. As detailed in his recent book, *The Five Percent: Finding Solutions to Seemingly Impossible Conflicts* (2011, Perseus), he is a self-described “empiricist” and one of a small group of social and hard scientists who have adapted ideas from complexity science and applied mathematics as well as psychology, anthropology, political science and even physics to analyze the most daunting, irrational, visceral conflicts and suggest paths to healing.

“Sometimes, fostering empathy between people is not enough,” Coleman says. “With some conflicts, you have to look deeply into the problem, look below the radar at some of the less obvious events and dynamics, to begin to understand all the things that are driving the conflict, separately and in relation to one another. But then you also have to bring it back to the real world, in real time, so we rely on the people directly involved in these situations to test our findings. We try, as much as we can, to take very abstract ideas and run them by the people on the ground,



“Darfur, Israel-Palestine, Congo, Afghanistan. Years ago, these were all smaller, more manageable problems, *but somehow they grew* and spread and became what they are today: *virtually impossible to solve.*”

to see what works and what doesn't.”

Coleman's book title refers to the 5 percent of intractable international conflicts first identified by the political scientists Paul F. Diehl and Gary Goertz, who examined 1,166 of the world's major international rivalries from 1816 to 2001. Diehl and Goertz found that while 95 percent of these conflicts could be resolved through diplomacy, mediation or military victory, the remaining situations were so complex and entrenched that they required an entirely different approach.

“Darfur, Israel-Palestine, Congo, Afghanistan,” Coleman says at one point during the course of four short videos in which he talks about his new book (see them at <http://fivepercentbook.com/?p=3>). “Years ago, these were all smaller, more manageable problems, but somehow they grew and spread and became what they are today: virtually impossible to solve.”

## UNDERSTANDING THE PATTERNS

IN *THE FIVE PERCENT*, COLEMAN IDENTIFIES 57 POSSIBLE causes of intractable conflicts, including power imbalances, deep identification with a conflict, religious and cultural differences and trauma. These variables can combine to form a complex system of constantly changing currents that are inseparable from one another.

“Most important to understanding these patterns,” Coleman writes in *The Five Percent*, “is a phenomenon called ‘*attractors*,’ organized patterns in the behavior of systems that emerge, endure, and of course attract. Picture how a whirlpool organizes in a river current, a tornado in a summer storm system or a violent maelstrom out at sea. All are strong, attracting structures formed by the dynamics of their surrounding conditions.” Attractor patterns of conflict rarely respond to third-party mediation and resist change in general. Some attractors may be invisible, but they represent “powerful forces that are really shaping what you see and what you think and feel and, ultimately, what you do,” Coleman says. “They suck people in and take over their lives. When complex conflicts escalate, it's just like everyone falls off a cliff. They fall into this huge hole that took years to dig but only seconds to fall into.”

Coleman is no stranger to conflict in his own life. Raised in Chicago in the 1960s, he experienced school desegregation and witnessed the violent antiwar movement and the nonviolent civil rights movement firsthand. He moved to Iowa at age 10 after his parents divorced. After working

with chronically violent youth in New York City in the 1980s, he returned to school to learn how to use the power of ideas and science to address difficult social problems.

He began exploring the literature and discovered the work of ICCCR founder Morton Deutsch, now TC Professor Emeritus of Psychology and Education, one of the fathers of the field of conflict resolution and himself a protégé of Kurt Lewin, a pioneer of social psychology. Coleman ended up working on his doctoral thesis at TC with Deutsch, collaborating with him on many projects and publications—including *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: Theory and Practice*, which has become one of the field's leading texts—and ultimately building on Deutsch's ideas.

In his personal life, Coleman once had a serious falling-out with a cousin that escalated into a protracted feud. “One time, he just crossed a line, and we had this huge argument and didn't talk for years,” he says. “We just got stuck.” Finally, after many efforts by relatives, the two had a rapprochement. Yet Coleman still has a hard time talking about it. “I can get sucked right back in,” he says. Perhaps because of this experience, Coleman has staked out intractable conflict as one of his main areas of expertise. Having been trained and certified as a community mediator by the New York Criminal Courts, he was surprised to learn that for a small percentage of conflicts, traditional negotiation and mediation tactics simply do not seem to help.

In *The Five Percent*, Coleman traces his own work back through Deutsch to Lewin, who “developed the field-theoretical approach to the study of social conflict” by incorporating two ideas from Gestalt psychology. The first idea is that every social phenomenon, including conflict, occurs in a “broad field of forces operating to move it in a positive or negative direction.” The second is that humans have a psychological need to simplify the complex. Simply put, we are driven to seek coherence and resolution in any confusing situation. Lewin also borrowed from the field theory of physics, which saw social phenomena not as a collection of individual forces between one body and another, but instead as a “complex field of forces” that should be analyzed in totality. Solving a complex conflict, Lewin said, requires that we resist the human tendency to oversimplify and instead continue to see it as a broad, constantly changing field of social relationships and currents.

Deutsch, in turn, has defined conflicts as either constructive, with people ultimately cooperating to achieve a

common goal, or destructive, with competition over a goal and unequivocal winners and losers. He has sought to understand the conditions that foster constructive outcomes rather than destructive ones and to apply those concepts to conflict mediation.

Coleman builds on these ideas by, first, identifying the situations—intractable conflicts—in which they do not apply. He uses complexity science, a relatively new branch of applied mathematics, to chart the many relationships and crosscurrents that often do not make sense or may even be hidden to the participants in an intractable conflict. As they exercise their cognitive tendency to simplify the complex, the combatants often oversimplify and dig in to a polarized, us-versus-them, I'm-right-and-you're-wrong mentality. But intractable conflicts are neither polar nor linear. They are whole systems—loops of interactions, hubs of agreement and disagreement—that form a landscape of attractors. Coleman's method “maps” the conflict, allowing the parties to see obvious and even hidden areas of agreement and impediments or aids to resolution. It also challenges the mediator to recognize that while emotions can and often should be put aside in more typical, lower-stakes disputes, they are central to intractable conflicts and must be addressed.

## BEYOND THE FORMULAIC

WHEN CONSULTING WITH A GROUP, COLEMAN ASKS CONFLICTING parties to set a goal of changing patterns of interaction, but not necessarily outcomes, as they air their differences. He asks them to let go of attractors, the hot buttons that pull them back into the conflict. “Traditionally we think of conflicts as having solutions, something like solving a math problem,” Sarah Lutman, President and Managing Director of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, wrote in a blog after participating in a Coleman-led workshop. “Thinking of an intractable conflict as [a] system, whose stasis depends on persistent tending of a landscape of forces and factors, is proving a helpful new conceptual framework for me as I go about my work.”

Coleman's research shows that complexity can foster tolerance as well as conflict, but only if people's day-to-day interactions can predispose them against polarized positions. Speaking about his book to an audience at the Harvard Club of New York City, he cites the example of Hindus and Muslims in India, who live in crowded, mixed communities, working, shopping and attending school together. These daily interactions allow people in each group to see those in the other as not entirely bad. In other places, however, where different groups live in close proximity but are not typically integrated (such as Israel and Palestine), that opportunity, for the most part, doesn't exist. The attractors have collapsed on one another and hardened into an intractable conflict that becomes progressively more difficult to resolve and gets handed down from generation to generation. There are Israelis and Palestinians born into the con-

flict who have never known another way to live. This makes it even more difficult to see past their problems.

During the past 13 years, Coleman has employed the ideas and methods of constructive conflict resolution to help various organizations at TC, elsewhere within Columbia University and outside the university resolve difficult conflicts. In 2001, in the wake of some racially charged incidents, he cochaired an internal TC committee studying issues related to race and cultural sensitivity—work that, among other things, led to the creation of what is now the Office of Community and Diversity. As a consultant, he has helped train young adults in Harlem to serve as conflict negotiators in high school classrooms, worked with a symphony orchestra in Detroit to resolve a violent labor dispute, and helped an interagency group of United Nations peacemakers understand the utility of employing complexity science to conflict and peace. Two years ago, Coleman received a joint appointment at Columbia University's Earth Institute, run by Jeffrey Sachs, where he is currently leading a series of faculty seminars on complexity science, modeling and sustainability. He has traveled to Haiti with Sachs and written about political and economic conditions there.

Coleman continues to oversee ICCCR's many activities but focuses his efforts on teaching, research and writing. He conducts some of his research through ICCCR's International Project on Conflict and Complexity, an interdisciplinary consortium of peace and conflict scholars and practitioners working in the areas of violence prevention, conflict resolution and sustainable peace. The project is run by a multidisciplinary research team consisting of Coleman, two social psychologists (Andrzej Nowak and Robin Vallacher), a physicist and expert in system dynamics (Larry Liebovitch), a social anthropologist and practitioner who specializes in international conflict and genocide prevention (Andrea Bartoli), and several doctoral students.

Coleman writes and blogs in the popular media, applying the 5 percent theory to current news and trends to help persuade doubters that intractable conflicts, as hopeless as they may seem, can be solved. He believes the principles in his book can provide a road map to solving the world's most intractable conflicts, but only if the gap between theorists and practitioners can be bridged. In a recent blog on the *Psychology Today* website, Coleman reported that a survey of conflict resolution practitioners revealed that their work “had been largely unaffected by the important contributions generated by” 18 university-based centers of conflict resolution, while “much of the research conducted at these centers was found to be ‘removed from practice realities and constraints.’” So Coleman presses on with his research but also makes sure it is available to conflict negotiators in the trenches. “I chose a career in conflict resolution because it felt real and it felt human,” he says. “And that's what my book tries to do: take some of these ideas and translate them into ‘What can we do to make people's lives better?’” **TC**

## PUTTING POVERTY ON THE TABLE

Laura Smith calls for psychology to acknowledge a pervasive problem

“DON'T EVER BE ASHAMED OF YOUR PEOPLE. They worked hard all their lives.”

Laura Smith, TC Assistant Professor of Counseling and Clinical Psychology, took these words, spoken by her grandfather at the kitchen table, to heart. Hailing from the mountains of Appalachia, in West Virginia, Smith's family was poor and hard working. Yet, as Smith recounts, this pairing—poverty and strength—has not been well-represented in a mainstream media that depicts poor mountain people as “dysfunctional in-breeders, lazy moonshiners or the Beverly Hillbillies.”

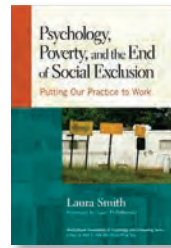
In her recent book, *Psychology, Poverty, and the End of Social Exclusion: Putting Our Practice to Work*, published by Teachers College Press, Smith calls for “a new perspective to our understanding of poverty...that will suggest new horizons of service and advocacy that go beyond sympathy, charity and conventional treatment modalities.” In other words, poverty is not simply a lack of money: it is a dynamic within the larger context of social class and hierarchy that should be considered by therapists who provide counseling to those who are poor.

“In the psychology field, there are lots of sincere altruistic intentions,” Smith says. “My hope is that this book will invite people to take a step back and look at the whole system.”

For clinicians, whose primary focus is their one-on-one relationship with clients, the idea of considering social hierarchy is relatively new. “It's just not a traditional part of how we work,” says Smith, who points out that mental health professionals must also examine how they, too, are part of the system. That is, what is the therapist's own hierarchical position, and how might that be relevant in the clinical setting?

*Psychology, Poverty, and the End of Social Exclusion* provides concrete methods for professionals to incorporate such new considerations in their daily practices. Drawing on extensive research from her colleagues, Smith also dedicates a chapter of her book to firsthand accounts of people living in poverty. Or as Theresa Funicello, a welfare mother, says, “How do you make public what so many people more powerful than you are trying their damndest to keep secret?”

EMILY ROSENBAUM



## MINDFULNESS: AN RX FOR ANXIOUS CHILDREN

Two TC alumnae fuse Buddhist and Western approaches

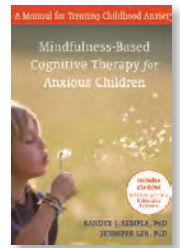
IN 2000, TWO TC DOCTORAL CANDIDATES, Randye J. Semple and Jennifer Lee, noticed that children in TC's Dean-Hope Center were complaining of noise in their neighborhoods—gunshots, traffic, parties, fights. The children were anxious and nervous and were having problems in school. Semple and Lee, who were students of Lisa Miller, Professor of Psychology and Education, decided to conduct a clinical trial of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) with the children. The result of that work is both a new track in spirituality and contemplative practice (taught by Miller) within TC's clinical psychology master's degree program and a new book by Semple and Lee, *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Anxious Children* (New Harbinger Publications, Inc., 2011).

Long-term childhood anxiety can prefigure depression and anxiety in adolescence and adulthood. MBCT may seem paradoxical, in that it fuses Buddhist meditative practices, which, as Semple and Lee write, promote “accepting things as they are,” with traditional Western cognitive therapy, which promotes “changing things we don't like.” Yet the authors examine how these “curious bedfellows,” which both seek “to reduce human suffering,” might complement one another as strategies for helping children ages 9 to 12. Their book, which comes with a CD and illustrated handouts, outlines a 12-week program that is also intended to help practicing therapists awaken their own spiritual awareness.

Practicing mindfulness means to remain in the present moment, focusing on awareness of thoughts and feelings and resisting distraction from the constant influx of stimuli that besiege us in our daily lives. One method Semple and Lee suggest for practicing mindfulness is simply to take three deep breaths and focus on nothing else for that moment. Performed daily, this short exercise can expand into deep meditation. The result can be profound: Semple and Lee report that the kids in their clinical trial concentrated better and paid closer attention to their schoolwork.

Semple is Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Southern California. Lee is a clinical psychologist practicing privately and at the Children's Home of Poughkeepsie, a residential treatment center. She holds an adjunct faculty position at Marist College.

STEVEN KROLL



## CLASS NOTES

Connecting alumni far and near with Teachers College and each other

### ARTS AND HUMANITIES

#### APPLIED LINGUISTICS

**Yuko Ikuta** (M.E., 1993) is a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Education, University of London.

#### ART AND ART EDUCATION

Artists and Fulbright Specialist Award recipients **Suzanne Reese-Horvitz** (Ed.D., 1977) and husband Robert Roesch have lectured at the Academy of Fine Arts in Azerbaijan and the China Art Academy.

**Elaine Simons** (M.A., 1991) is co-founding Executive Director of Peace for the Streets by Kids from the Streets.

#### MUSIC AND MUSIC EDUCATION

**Virginia Allen** (Ed.D., 2011) directed Juilliard School's summer Conducting Workshop for Music Educators.

**Alex Marrero** (M.A., 2010) is a recruit-

ed volunteer for the Orange County Youth Symphony of Harriman, NY. **Normearleasa Thomas (Thomas-Jackson)** (M.A., 1986) plays cello with the Columbia University Symphony Orchestra and other orchestras. **TESOL**

**Joshua Klaris** (M.A., 1995) is a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Program at The Harvard Graduate School of Education.

### COMMUNICATION, COMPUTING AND TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

#### COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

**Jennifer Lemiech-Iervolino** (M.A., 1999) is a Trustee of the Yonkers, New York Public Library system.

#### COMPUTING IN EDUCATION

**Xiang'e Bove** (M.A., 1997) was named the 2011 Taconic Region (New York) PTA Teacher of the Year.

#### INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

#### AND MEDIA

**John Desjarlais** (M.A., 1984) published his second mystery, *Viper* (Sophia Institute Press). He was on faculty in the Mystery Writers of America University at September's Bouchercon World Mystery Convention.

**Richard Yee** (M.A., 2001) is Principal of Cupertino Union School District's K-8 McAuliffe School.

### COUNSELING & CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY

#### EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY-HUMAN COGNITION

**Alice Wilder's** (Ed.D., 1998) Cha-Ching Money-Smart Kids, is an animated financial literacy program airing on Cartoon Network-Asia.

#### PSYCHOLOGY IN EDUCATION

**Violeta Petroska-Beshka** (M.A., 1983) received the 2011 Teachers College Distinguished Alumni Award.

#### GUIDANCE

**Judith Osborne (Hanford)** (M.A., 1966) published *Wisdom for Separated Parents: Rearranging Around the Children to Keep Kinship Strong* (Praeger).

**Pauline Hamburger Ungar** (M.A., 1967) was graduation speaker at her alma mater, George Washington High School, in Washington Heights.

### CURRICULUM & TEACHING

#### CURRICULUM & TEACHING

**Emily N. Skinner** (Ed.D., 2006) is Co-Editor of *The Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* (JAAL).

**Eleanor Thompson** (M.A., 2000) has retired. She has repeatedly survived cancer and served on the Beacon City Council and as a presidential delegate for Hillary Clinton.

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

**Lorna Duphiney Edmundson** (Ed.D., 1975) retired in June after 40



In October, John W. Hyland, Jr., Co-Chair of the TC Board of Trustees led the Alumni Council in a toast to Joyce B. Cowin on her 40 years of service to the Council.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT YOU CAN GIVE TO THE ANNUAL FUND WITH FUNDS FROM YOUR IRA?

The Pension Protection Act, which was once again renewed by Congress, provides for tax-free gifts to charities made directly from one's Individual Retirement Account (IRA). To take advantage of this opportunity, the following must occur:

- You must be 70 ½ or older and required to take a minimum distribution from your IRA account

- You transfer funds directly from an IRA or Rollover IRA with the help of your plan administrator. 401ks and 403Bs are not eligible giving vehicles.

- The gifts are not more than \$100,000 in total

- You make the gift to a charity like Teachers College

Please note that these gifts cannot be used to establish a charitable gift annuity or a charitable remainder trust and these gifts are not eligible for a charitable deduction.

For more information, please visit the giving pages on our web site at [www.tc.edu/supporttc](http://www.tc.edu/supporttc) or call Development and External Affairs at 212-678-3037.

## ALUMNI COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Alumni,

Your Alumni Association Council has been making strategic changes to better (re) connect you to the TC community. We want you to feel inspired, continue learning and experience a sense of kinship with a diverse group of colleagues who share a common educational experience and belief in life-long learning.

For those who may have wanted to connect to other graduates but didn't know how, we have expanded the ad hoc member role on the council, so you no longer have to be a full member to participate. This offers an opportunity to be an integral part of evenings with experts, idea cafes and the social/networking events that you may have read about or attended. Not sure what I'm talking about? Take a look at the committee descriptions below, and consider how you might want to engage, either as an ad hoc committee volunteer or simply an attendee.

The **Alumni Wants and Needs Committee** determines council activities that would be most attractive to TC alumni. If you want to represent the interests of alumni from your particular TC program, contact the Office of Alumni Relations at [tcalumni@tc.edu](mailto:tcalumni@tc.edu) or call 212.678.3215. If you simply want to be informed about these events, email us.

The **Programs and Resources Committee** actively plans lectures, socials, screenings and networking events. Members take leadership roles in executing events, supported by ad hoc council members and the Office of Alumni Relations. The committee has sponsored, among other events, Gordon Gee's lecture on the future of higher ed and a speed networking evening. If you have a creative idea for an event, or know an interesting, affordable space in the city where alumni can gather, contact us.

The **Awards and Recognition**



Adam Vane

**Committee** recommends ways to recognize the accomplishments and contributions of alumni, in particular by proposing candidates for the annual Distinguished Alumni and Early Career Awards, which will be given at Academic Festival 2012 on April 21. To nominate a fellow alumnus who has

made an extraordinary impact on his or her field since graduation, download our form at [www.tc.edu/alumni](http://www.tc.edu/alumni). This year, we are also exploring more creative forms of recognition, including Skype video interviews with alumni in the field.

The **International Outreach Committee** recruits alumni outside the U.S. to serve as Country Representatives for the International Alumni Network and supports them in organizing local alumni activities. The committee also promotes events for current international students to keep connected to TC after they return to their home countries. If you would like to get involved as your country's IAN Rep, email [tcalumni@tc.edu](mailto:tcalumni@tc.edu).

Finally, the **Nominating Committee** solicits nominations and selects candidates for membership on the council, evaluates ad hoc member contributions and recommends candidates for inclusion on the full alumni council. If you think you would make a strong contribution to the Association as either an ad hoc or full member, download the nomination form at [www.tc.edu/alumni](http://www.tc.edu/alumni) or contact the Office of Alumni Relations for more information at [tcalumni@tc.edu](mailto:tcalumni@tc.edu) or 212-678-3215.

Please send any further suggestions to Rosella Garcia, Director of Alumni Relations, at [garcia@tc.edu](mailto:garcia@tc.edu).

Thanks for all of your contributions. I look forward to connecting with you at one of our events this year.

Sincerely,

**Adam Vane, President,**

TEACHERS COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

## TEACHERS COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The Teachers College Alumni Association is led by the Alumni Council, which consists of 35 members who represent all 90,000 graduates. The Council partners with the Department of Development and External Affairs to advance the goals of the College by providing alumni with opportunities to remain involved in the life of the College through social activities, volunteer efforts and financial support.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Adam Vane, PRESIDENT  
Robert Weintraub, IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT  
Patrick McGuire, PRESIDENT-ELECT

### STANDING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIRS

ALUMNI WANTS & NEEDS COMMITTEE  
Peter Dillon, Carolyn McNally

AWARDS & RECOGNITION COMMITTEE  
Susan Diamond, Diana Newman

INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH COMMITTEE  
Marion Boulton, Fred Brodzinski

NOMINATING COMMITTEE  
Connie Green, Maryalice Mazzara

PROGRAMS & RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
Patrick McGuire, Kathleen Morin

MEMBERS-AT-LARGE  
Maritza Macdonald, Tara Niraula

HISTORIAN  
James J. Shields

All alumni are encouraged to get more involved with the Alumni Association by serving on one of the standing committees.

If you would like to serve on the Alumni Council, you can find a nomination form on the alumni website. Nominations for the coming term's membership, which begins in May are due by December 31, 2011. Council members serve a three-year term. For more information about the Alumni Council and to download your nomination form, please visit our Web site: [www.tc.edu/alumni](http://www.tc.edu/alumni).

years in higher education and is now a part-time international education and strategic planning consultant.

**Salvatore Vascellaro** (Ed.D., 1999) has published *Out of the Classroom and Into the World* (The New Press).

#### ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

**Kendra (Stichler) VanVelzor** (M.A., 2008) was married in June 2011.

**Derek Jackson** (M.A., 2000) earned a TC Master of Arts while on the New York City police force.

**Bryan Jackson** (M.A., 2004), a third-grade teacher at the Latin School of Chicago, has received the University of Minnesota College of Education and Human Development's William E. Gardner Pre-K Outstanding Educator Award.

#### EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

**Frank Marlow** (Ed.D., 1967) teaches at SUNY Stony Brook's Harriman School of Business. He consults for New Jersey municipalities on defeated school budgets.

**Stephen Ryan** (M.A., 2001) is Principal of West Morris Central High School in Chester, NJ.

**Robert Stickles** (Ed.D., 1978) is Principal of his alma mater, Roselle Catholic High School in Roselle, NJ.

#### INQUIRY IN EDUCATIONAL ADMIN.

#### PRACTICE (TAI)

Former TC Alumni Council President **Delores Lowe Friedman**

(Ed.D., 1993) has published *Creating and Presenting an Early Childhood Education Portfolio* (Cengage).

## EDUCATION POLICY AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

#### SOCIOLOGY AND EDUCATION

SUNY/Albany Assistant Professor **Pamela Theroux** (Ph.D., 2000) is on leave, evaluating an Australian education reform project's impact.

## HEALTH AND BEHAVIOR STUDIES

#### HEALTH EDUCATION

**Betty Perez-Rivera** (Ed.D., 2003) is working with under-served families in East Harlem to reduce asthma hospitalizations and ER visits.

#### EDUCATION OF THE EMOTIONALLY DISTURBED

**Norm Freimark** (Ed.D., 1992) has retired as Executive Director of State-Wide Schools Cooperative Health Plan (SWSCHP).

## HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

#### ADULT EDUCATION INTENSIVE STUDY

**Jerry Julian** (Ed.D., 2008) is working on China-based initiatives with his private equity partners at Global China Holdings. Jerry and Yi Fang, TC alumni coordinator for China, recently discussed Yi's

work at Hewlett-Packard.

#### STUDENT PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

**Catherine Ingram** (M.A., 1991) is Alumni Affairs and Annual Fund Associate at Bard College at Simon's Rock in Massachusetts.

**Robert Obrohta** (M.A., 1989) oversees creation of The Tennessee College Access and Success Network, funded by Race to the Top.

## INT'L & TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES

#### INT'L EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Sarah Usmani** (M.A., 2010) opened the Tabeer School in Karachi, Pakistan, for children ages 3-7.

**Maika Watanuki** (M.A., 2009) works at the Mozambique Country Office of The World Bank and would like to connect with TC alumni.

## LANGUAGE, LITERATURE & SOCIAL STUDIES

Internist **Gerald I. Blank** (M.A., 1951) attended medical school at Switzerland's University of Bern and practiced in New Britain, CT. **David Carr** (M.A., 1968) has published three books: *The Promise of Cultural Institutions* (2003), *A Place Not a Place* (2006), and *Open Conversations* (2011).

**Edith Shih** (M.E., 1978) received

## CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

As the song says, transitions are hard, but often fruitful, too. Elizabeth Reid focuses on them

**E**LIZABETH REID HAD MANY IMPORTANT experiences at TC, but none more so than her first day. It was Summer 1997, and Reid, who had left her career in investment banking, stood up in psychology professor Barry Farber's class to explain her goals.

"Others in the class were psychology majors, very experienced," Reid recalls. "I said I was simply exploring something that had always interested me."

Reid was certain her brief explanation sounded lame, but Farber warmly welcomed her, proclaiming her statement more than satisfactory. "I had a feeling that I had really found myself," says Reid, who would earn an M.A. in developmental psychology (1999) and M.S., M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees in clinical psychology (2005, 2006 and 2009), all at TC. "I had made the transition."



Elizabeth Reid

Since then, Reid has helped others not only survive transitions but also use them as moments of redefinition. At TC, she joined psychologist Lisa Miller in a feasibility study for fifth-graders and in clinical work at Mount Sinai Medical Center. With children, she says, "there's always a chance that you can help change the course of their lives." In her practice, Reid works with children at risk for dropping out of school or getting in trouble with the law.

Today, as a postdoctoral fellow at the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute, she also sees women dealing with change, from relocating to New York City to graduating to changing careers. The mother of two children and two stepchildren, Reid is considering enrolling as a candidate in psychoanalytic training. "My interest is working with patients on a deeper level," Reid says. "It goes back to what drew me to psychology in the first place: never thinking of the quick fix, but exploring something on a whole other level in order to take the next step." **JIM REISLER**



## PLAN AHEAD FOR YEAR-END GIVING TO THE ANNUAL FUND

You can help both Teachers College and yourself by making a charitable contribution before December 31.

Cash and securities are deductible charitable contributions. If you give a gift of appreciated securities that you have held for longer than one year, you can deduct the full fair market value on your 2011 tax return and avoid capital gains tax.

If you wish to give a gift of appreciated securities or mutual fund

shares, contact your investment advisor soon to be sure your gift is completed by December 31. You can also use appreciated securities to establish a charitable gift annuity with Teachers College that will provide you with a fixed income for life, as well as a charitable deduction.

If we can assist as you plan a gift of stock, please see the stock transfer instructions on our giving Web pages at [www.tc.edu/supporttc](http://www.tc.edu/supporttc) or contact Stephanie Berry or call 212-678-3231.

Please note that a stock transfer can take up to seven business days to complete, so remember to plan early.

a newly redesigned Columbia University Alumni Medal from Michael Griffin, Executive Director for Alumni Relations, in Hong Kong in June. Columbia has created new medals for past recipients like Shih, first honored in 1993.

### TEACHING OF ENGLISH

**Matthew Murrie** (M.A., 2005) published his fourth book, *Every Day on Earth* (Scholastic).

**Timothy S. Sedore** (Ed.D., 1996), Professor of English at Bronx Community College (CUNY), has published *An Illustrated Guide to Virginia's Confederate Monuments*

(Southern Illinois University Press).

### TEACHING OF SOCIAL STUDIES

**Valerie (Rockefeller) Wayne** (M.A., 1998) is involved with her children's schools and serves on the board of DC Preparatory Academy, a charter school network in Washington.

## MOVEMENT SCIENCES AND EDUCATION

### CURRICULUM & TEACHING IN PHYSICS EDUCATION

**Lisa A. Pleban** (Ed.D., 1998), Physical Education Associate Professor at Castleton State College, received the Alumni Association

Outstanding Faculty Award at Castleton's 2011 Commencement.

### PHYSICAL EDUCATION

**Robert Stadulis** (M.A., 1967; Ed.D., 1971) still teaches part-time and consults on grants at Kent State University. He is Editor of the Ohio Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance's scholarly journal, *Future Focus*.

## NURSING EDUCATION

### NURSING EDUCATION PROFESSIONAL ROLE

**Elizabeth Speakman** (Ed.D., 2000, M.Ed., 1985) is Associate Dean of Student Affairs at Thomas Jefferson



*"When my husband and I created our Charitable Remainder Trust, we named Teachers College as a beneficiary. Our trust provides me with annual income and will provide a significant gift to TC."*

—Mary Ann Seipos, M.A., Special Education  
Grace Dodge Society member since 2002



For more information on gift annuities, bequests or other planned gifts, please contact:

Louis Lo Ré  
Director of Planned Giving  
212-678-3037 or email: [lore@tc.edu](mailto:lore@tc.edu)

University, Jefferson School of Nursing and serves on the National League for Nursing's Board of Governors.

## ORGANIZATION AND LEADERSHIP

### EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP STUDIES

**Bett Alter** (M.A., 2009) is coordinating the transition from single-sex to fully coeducational boarding at Christchurch School.

### HIGHER AND ADULT EDUCATION

**Joe Hankin** (Ed.D., 1967) is celebrating 45 years of higher education presidency, including 40 at Westchester Community College.

### ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

**Kristine Hintz** (M.A., 1996),

founder of Position U 4 College LLC, in New Jersey, has published *Navigating the Road to College: A Handbook for Parents*.

## PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

### INT'L EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

**Norma T. Nemej** (M.E., 1999; Ed.D., 2003) seeks TC alumni in Amman, Jordan.

### PHILOSOPHY AND EDUCATION

**Anna Marie Delmoro**

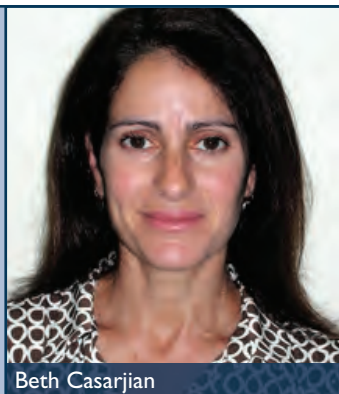
**Peterson** (M.E., 2002) has joined the STEP-UP Achieve Summer Jobs Program of Achieve Minneapolis, partner to the Minneapolis Public Schools.

### SOCIOLOGY AND EDUCATION

**Judy (Pryor) Mejia** (M.A., 2005) is Director of Civic Engagement and Social Justice at Eugene Lang College, The New School University. She has a four-year-old son, Diego.

## UNRAVELING DANGEROUS DECISIONS

Going straight to the source to change kids' risky behaviors



Beth Casarjian

**T**O STOP DRUG ABUSE, gang activity and other high-risk behavior by young people—especially those who have endured tough circumstances—you've got to help them understand the emotions and beliefs that brought them to that point. Such intense "emotional literacy," as Beth Casarjian terms it, is at the heart of The Power Source curriculum, Casarjian's 11-step program of discussion topics, role-playing, reflective written exercises, meditation and guided visualizations. Described in Casarjian's 2003 book, *Power Source: Taking Charge of Your Life*, the curriculum is in use at some 3,500 juvenile detention centers, schools and residential programs. The program also is a cornerstone project of the Lionheart Foundation, a Boston-based non-profit founded by Casarjian's aunt and co-author, Robin Casarjian, herself a TC alumna.

Beth Casarjian graduated from Wesleyan College in 1991 with the goal of becoming an English professor. She enrolled at TC after working with at-risk youth during a year-long stint as a peer mentor at Boston's English High School. Working with TC's Marla Brassard, Casarjian became interested in issues of peer victimization, bullying and parental abuse of children. She is now the Lionheart Foundation's Clinical Director of Youth Services, leading a five-year, federally funded study of post-prison re-arrest rates among adolescents who were incarcerated at New York's Rikers Island. "The opportunity to work directly with people in need is part of what drives us," says Casarjian, the mother of three children, ages 14, 10 and 8. "It's a great window of opportunity to learn."

JIM REISLER

## HEALING REALITY'S WOUNDS

Understanding trauma by studying Vietnam veterans



Ghislaine Boulanger

**A**S A CHILD OF THE SIXTIES, Ghislaine Boulanger (Ph.D. '81) attended many antiwar rallies. So in 1976, as a doctoral student in TC's Clinical Psychology Program, she jumped at the chance to work on the first-ever epidemiological study of Vietnam veterans as the focus for her dissertation.

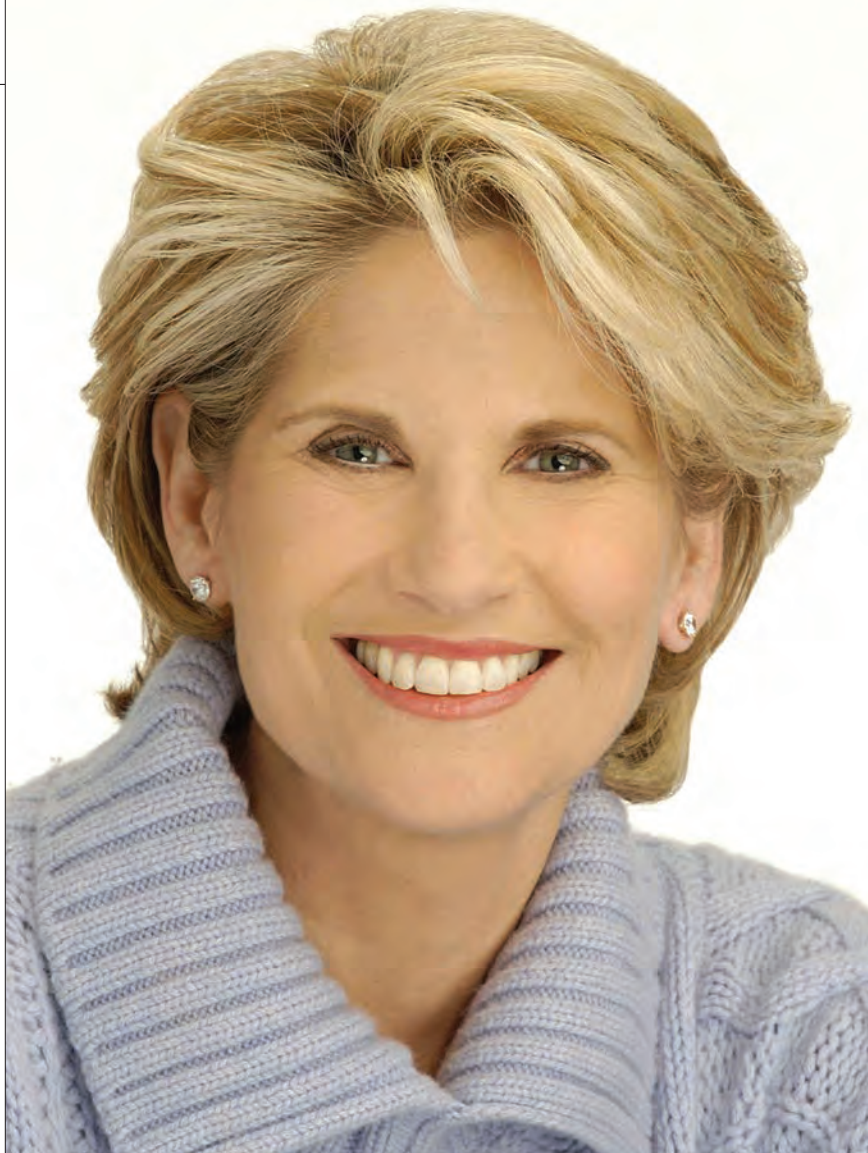
Very quickly, Boulanger began to wonder: Why were so many veterans suffering psychological breakdown after returning home? The term posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was not yet in the lexicon; the condition was known simply as post-Vietnam syndrome. Boulanger discovered that the reactions of soldiers who had been exposed to moderate levels of combat were partly influenced by their family background, education and other factors—but for soldiers exposed to higher levels of combat, background didn't matter. "A soldier will develop some post-traumatic stress symptoms at intense levels of combat, regardless of predisposing factors," says Boulanger, a prominent New York City-based psychoanalyst who taught psychodynamic theory at TC and is now on the faculty at the NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis. "It was a stunning finding because up until then psychodynamic therapists believed that childhood factors always mediated what happened in adulthood."

The work of Boulanger and her colleagues prompted the Veterans Administration to open 90

additional Vet Centers offering psychological services to Vietnam era vets. It also shaped Boulanger's career as a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in both private practice and the community. Her 2007 book, *Wounded by Reality: Understanding and Treating Adult Onset Trauma*, details how catastrophic events can scar the psyche in profound ways often unrecognized by clinicians who emphasize patients' childhoods and family histories. "Survivors can be people who lived through combat, a serious accident, a natural disaster, or an act of terrorism," she says. "It results in a near-fatal disruption of fundamental aspects of self-experience."

Boulanger has consulted for the Far Fund Project, which explores Hurricane Katrina's effects on the local therapeutic community, and in 2009 joined with colleagues in resigning from the American Psychological Association to protest the organization's "complicity" in the "illegal and inhuman" detention of prisoners at Guantánamo Bay. Four years ago, while visiting family, Boulanger discovered that, as head of the Aliens Department in the British Home Office during World War II, her grandfather, Ernest Napier Cooper, had enabled untold numbers of Jews to escape Europe. "Even though I was a very little girl, somehow my grandfather transmitted his values and activism to me," Boulanger says.

JIM REISLER



## Work, Life, Balance

For Dr. Dale,  
a simple principle  
has anchored an  
eclectic career

by JIM REISLER

**B**ACK IN THE 1980S AT THE John Tracy Clinic in Los Angeles, Dale Atkins (MA '72, Special Education) was videotaping a session on parenting behavior, speech and language with a mother and her hearing-impaired child when the woman's other child began demanding attention. When the mother failed to respond, the outburst escalated and Atkins intervened. She had to show the mother the tape three times, but the woman finally got the point: Success for the family depended on meeting the needs of

both her children. Balance was essential.

Thirty years later, Dr. Dale, as she is now widely known, is famous for her concept of balanced living, which she champions with patients, in speeches and presentations, and as a frequent guest on the *Today* show. On issues ranging from parenting and marriage to workplace bullying, the stresses of job change and even sibling rivalry, "my focus continues to be all about balance and staying well, healthy and focused on what's important," she says. "Contrary to common logic, people *can* change the map of how they're brought up and choose a path that works. The goal is to reexamine your decisions."

Atkins speaks from experience. At 21, she was head counselor at a tennis and ski camp in Austria but had to head home to New Jersey after a serious skiing accident. While in physical therapy, she befriended children undergoing their own therapy and rediscovered a passion for working with young people.

At Teachers College, she earned a master's degree in special education with a concentration in deafness and thereafter taught at the Lexington School for the Deaf in New York. As she worked with families of deaf children, Atkins expanded her focus to sibling relationships, a topic she explored in her UCLA doctoral dissertation and, subsequently, in her workshops and book, *Sisters*. Meanwhile, she's branched out, writing on everything from creating better relationships with aging parents, in *I'm OK, You're My Parents*, to marriage, in *From the Heart*. Having her two sons, Jono and Josh, get married in the same year inspired Atkins to write *Wedding Sanity Savers*. She wrote *Sanity Savers: Tips for Women to Live a Balanced Life* from a desire to help people healthfully juggle multiple aspects of life.

"I've always liked doing several things at once and finding the connections," Atkins says. One link that's always present for her: "I'm forever in awe of how people have lived their lives to date and how they really want to take charge and change. And if I'm lucky enough years later to find out that the changes we worked on made a difference, well, that's gratifying."

TC



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