Welcome to the fall issue of Psychology Matters, the quarterly newsletter of the Department of Psychology.

In August, we re-connected with psychology alums during the American Psychological Association Convention in Denver. If you were not able to join us in person, you can see photos of the fun on Facebook. We look forward to hosting more alumni events in the future, so please stay tuned. I hope you will also check out this issue's Alumni Matters feature to learn how one undergraduate alum (Anne Munch, BA Psychology and Sociology, 1981; JD, 1986) brings our mission to life by contributing to the public good.

This month, we kicked off the new academic year by welcoming 5 new faculty to our department (Visiting Teaching Assistant Professor Edward Garrido, Assistant Professor Lauren McGrath, Assistant Professor Angela Narayan, Assistant Professor Peter Sokol-Hessner, Assistant Professor Leanne ten Brinke) as well as 8 new graduate students. Discoveries Orientation brought together the class of 2020 and a new cohort of majors. We are eager to meet new majors and minors in classes as well as at the upcoming AHSS Major Open House.

As we look ahead to the coming year, we have the opportunity to continue to build our outstanding faculty. We are excited to have positions open in Affective Science, Child Clinical, and Stress Early Experience and Development. Please help us get the word out about these opportunities to your professional networks!

For news and updates, we hope you will stay engaged with our psychology community through this quarterly newsletter and on Facebook. Please email us if you have stories to share in future newsletters.

Photo Caption: Welcoming first-year graduate students to our department.
Alumni Matters

Anne Munch, JD
BA, Psychology and Sociology, 1981; JD, 1986

The love of learning came to life for me my junior year of high school when I took my first psychology class. The interest I had always enjoyed in people; what made them tick, what influenced their personalities and choices, found a place where it could be explored and nurtured at the University of Denver where I continued my studies in psychology and sociology. Those years stand out as the best time in the history of my own educational development. My love of people and interest in justice took me to law school, also at the University of Denver.

I spent thirteen great years prosecuting interpersonal violence cases at DA's offices located in Denver, Telluride and Golden, Colorado. My work with victims of interpersonal violence opened my eyes to the challenges that victims of sexual assault and domestic violence are faced with beyond the crime itself. Sexual assault victim in particular are often misunderstood and blamed for the very crimes committed against them. As an example, it is not uncommon for law enforcement officers and others to lack understanding of how trauma impacts the victim during and after the crime which can lead to a victims being misjudged.

I decided to launch a speaking, training and consulting business in order to confront the vast and complicated problems associated with these cases in our culture. This decision put me squarely in the midst of a golden opportunity to respond to the sexual assault crisis in this country, first with the military and soon after with colleges and universities. I enjoy the privilege of working with each branch of our military both in the US and abroad, with criminal justice workers across the country and with institutions of higher learning as they reform their responses to the debilitating reality of interpersonal violence.

I never dreamed that my work would take me to Europe, Japan, Korea, the pentagon and even to the White House. I meet survivors everywhere I go; their stories inspire me to apply everything I learned (and continue to learn) in the field of psychology and mix it with the power that the law promises a civilized culture in order to ensure that we live in a safe and just society. This unique niche at the intersection of psychology and law has created an amazing career for me. I take the time to mentor young women and men who desire to "do what I do"; it gives me hope that we can continue making progress in this critically important field.

I am so appreciative of the educational foundation that DU gave me!

Diversity Matters

Angela Narayan, PhD
Assistant Professor

How do pregnant women prepare to raise their babies when they are burdened by memories of traumatic events from their own upbringing? How might positive childhood memories overpower traumatic memories to strengthen preparation for motherhood, and how do the content and strength of these memories vary according to cultural influences? What kinds of resources can high-risk pregnant women draw upon to help them raise healthy children?
The PROTECT Lab (Promoting Resilience in Offspring and Targeting Early Childhood Trajectories) is directed by Dr. Angela Narayan and tries to understand how the intergenerational transmission of risk (simply put, the cascading effects of trauma and adversity within families) can be overcome by protective factors such as social support, coping ability, and memories of positive early life experiences. The PROTECT Lab, which studies both Spanish- and English-speaking families, is particularly interested in how resilience and adaptation vary by cultural identity, family-of-origin relationships, and turning points in development.

By identifying how positive childhood experiences and other supportive resources protect new parents against the transmission of risk, PROTECT aims to make headway in identifying promising ways to intervene during the prenatal period. Prevention efforts during pregnancy will help deter family adversity before the baby is born and parenting practices begin to solidify.

The PROTECT Lab uses quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather comprehensive accounts of parents' life experiences through standardized instruments, narrative accounts, and observational assessments. These methods not only honor the stories of the families but also provide important predictive information. PROTECT has discovered that risk, resilience, and parenting are connected in unique ways for low-income Latina, African-American, White, and Southeast Asian families.

Another major piece of the intergenerational transmission puzzle involves understanding the key role that fathers' childhood experiences play in shaping the environment that welcomes the new baby. Fathers' perspectives, an understudied area, provide valuable insight into parenting across generations.

The PROTECT Lab bridges clinical and developmental basic and translational research and will be continuing to pursue these research questions in the Department of Psychology at DU starting this fall, 2016.

**Major Matters**

Nadeen Khweis  
Psychology Major, 2017

My name is Nadeen Khweis, and I am the President of the student organization, Psi Chi, here at the University of Denver. Psi Chi, the national honor society for psychology students, is known to collaborate with the Psychology Club in order to host numerous beneficial events throughout the year. These events include Psych Research Night in the fall, Psi Chi Induction in the winter, Grad School and Career Night in the spring, and the Psych Department Picnic in the spring.

During these events, students learn about important tools and resources they can use to thrive in the field of psychology. For example, at Psych Research Night, members have the opportunity to hear about research being conducted in the Psychology Department and can go on to pursue Research Assistant positions in the psychology labs that interest them. Being a Research Assistant not only looks good on one's resume when applying for a job or graduate school, but it also allows one to experience the research side to the field of psychology.
The Psi Chi Induction in the winter is a ceremony, where we induct psychology majors and minors who fulfill the requirements, such as having a minimum GPA of 3.6. These are students who demonstrate superior scholarship in psychology.

Grad School and Career Night in the spring is an event that every psychology student should attend. Psychology faculty discuss career opportunities available for those with a bachelor’s degree, a master's degree, and a PhD. They also describe the graduate school application process and provide a timeline showing when students need to complete specific steps.

At the Psych Department Picnic in the spring, awards are presented to psychology students. Afterwards, a set of psychology students present the research they have done.

The Psi Chi and Psych Club organize a wide array of events that are very beneficial. Through these events, students have the opportunity to expand their knowledge in the field of psychology as well as learn about which career paths are possible with a psychology degree. Having been a member of both these clubs, I have benefitted tremendously from the resources they have provided. As the new president of Psi Chi, I look forward to providing guidance and support to our students. I hope to see new faces at our events!

Research Matters: Clinical Science

Galena Rhoades, PhD
Research Associate Professor

Research suggests that pregnancy can be a time of heightened risk for romantic relationship problems, instability, and stress, particularly for those with low-income levels. It also represents a time when women are accessible for preventative programming, as they are typically already receiving preventative prenatal medical care within a hospital system. Yet, hospitals and prenatal clinics rarely offer relationship education or family support.

Our program responds to this gap in services. Over the course of the five-year project, which is funded by the federal Administration for Children and Families, 1,000 to 1,500 women who are pregnant and who are receiving prenatal care services in the Denver Health hospital system, the primary center for Medicaid-covered births in Denver, will participate in a 6-week healthy relationship education program. The primary focus of the program is an empirically-based healthy relationship education curriculum, Within My Reach, delivered to groups of women as weekly workshops. Information on infant care and building healthy relationships between parents and their babies is also included. In addition, comprehensive case management services will be offered and women enrolled will have access to a range of other community services, such as mental health services offered within Denver Health's prenatal care clinics and workforce development training and counseling through our partner, the Center for Work, Education, and Employment. All program participants will also learn about resources and help for domestic/family violence through our domestic-violence prevention partner, SafeHouse Denver. Lastly, if they are interested, women enrolled in the proposed program will also have the opportunity to attend a separate, couple-based healthy relationship education workshop with their partner. Incentives for attendance and supports to reduce barriers to attending (e.g., childcare, transportation, provision of meals) will be offered. All services will be available in English and Spanish.
This project has been selected to be part of a federal evaluation of the grant program under which it was funded. This evaluation will include a comprehensive implementation study and a randomized-controlled trial measuring the effectiveness of the program against treatment-as-usual. It will measure the program's impact on maternal stress, the quality and stability of romantic relationships, co-parenting, and obstetrical outcomes.

Teaching Matters

Maria Islas-Lopez, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow

There seems to be a consensus in higher education that classrooms should be spaces that foster diversity and incubators for inclusivity. But how does one address inclusivity and diversity while teaching content that, on the face of it, has nothing to do with them?

For the past two years, as an IRISE postdoctoral fellow in the Psychology Department, I had the challenging and exciting opportunity to craft an inclusive classroom that benefits from bringing multiple voices to the social experience of learning. Drawing on one of my ongoing lines of research, I taught an interdisciplinary class meant to prepare students to make theoretically informed observations on the different mechanisms impacting our future-oriented thinking and its myriad consequences. The class drew on insights from several disciplines—including psychology, sociology, economics and development studies—to address some of the ways that goals, hopes, predictions, and aspirations produce implications for a range of individual and social phenomena. We learned, among other topics, about the ways that future oriented thinking works in the brain, how our attention to a future time can respond to environmental demands and how the conception of a future self has implications for action and motivation. These topics provided opportunities for examining a variety of contexts and experiences that supported the course content while allowing for conversations about diversity and equity: for example, youth in the UK imagining their futures as they transition from school to work; the impact of poverty on the construction of hope for families in Latin America; the efforts at raising aspirations and education attainment for girls in India and for changing forward-looking behavior in rural Ethiopia. This wide range of experiences also served as a springboard for considerations whose orbit was closer to home, as we pursued conversations about students' own future trajectories and the circumstances impacting them, including broader questions on inequalities and social justice. One of the ways we explored students' individual goals in a broader social context was to examine the DU Impact 2025 strategic plan, developing scenarios for the DU of the future to understand the challenges in creating a common future as a university community.

What I learned about this experience is that aligning pedagogy, course content and inclusivity work fosters students' readiness to explore the relatedness of phenomena they often think of separately. Yet, it is no easy task. Often, the greatest challenge inheres in the surprising ways that addressing diversity requires us to pull out of our disciplinary silos.