A Scholarship can Fuel a Career

In 2004, Jamilia Blake was a graduate student at the University of Georgia who became one of three graduate students to win the $20,000 Elizabeth Munsterberg Koppitz Fellowship. Seven years later, she is an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University, Director of the University’s Peer Relations and Adjustment Lab, and Principal Investigator of the “Peer Relations as Moderators of Success” study and the “Study of Adolescent Resiliency (S.O.A.R.).” Since receiving the Koppitz fellowship, Dr. Blake has published ten articles and book chapters, conducted over twenty presentations, and published articles from her dissertation, which served as the basis for her Koppitz proposal. The pilot data that Dr. Blake collected as a result of receiving the Koppitz Fellowship led to her receipt of a number of small grants, the most notable being a grant from the Hogg Foundation. She will begin publishing the findings from this grant in the spring of 2011.

She continues to examine how the intersection between race/ethnicity, gender, and community context impacts the social and psychological adjustment of aggressive youth, particularly African American girls. In addition to exploring this line of inquiry, her research also examines the experiences and consequences of peer victimization for children in middle childhood and early adolescence.

Decision-Making: What Causes Risky and Antisocial Behavior?

Parents often wonder what drives poor decision making in their adolescent children. Elizabeth Shulman, MA, will use her APF F.J. McGuigan Dissertation Award to examine the role that unconscious thought processes play in adolescents’ risky decisions. A doctoral candidate in the Department of Psychology and Social Behavior at the University of California, Irvine, Shulman’s research interests concern the developmental factors that contribute to adolescents’ involvement in risky and antisocial behavior. Her dissertation study, “Deciding in the Dark: Differences between Adolescents and Adults in Unconscious Decision-Making Processes,” will compare the performance of pre-adolescents, adolescents and adults on several decision-making tasks designed to assess unconscious risk evaluation.
Using Neuropsychology to Protect Athletes

Professional sports leagues have seen the rate of concussions increase exponentially in the past few years. They want to ensure that players return to action after suffering a concussion only when they are 100% healthy, but the leagues’ ability to determine readiness may be compromised. Amanda Rabinowitz of Pennsylvania State University will use her APF Benton Meier Scholarship to improve assessment so that players do not return before they are ready and suffer the possibility of serious, often permanent damage.

Teams gauge readiness by comparing the athlete’s baseline testing to post-concussion testing; however, baseline tests may not provide an accurate portrayal of the athlete’s cognitive skills. Many athletes are less engaged in baseline testing than in post-concussion testing and do not exhibit the same motivation they have after an injury. Athletes are often highly motivated to return to play after suffering a concussion, and they are eager to demonstrate to the assessor that they are functioning well. Rabinowitz plans to study in-the-moment fluctuations in the emotional, cognitive, and physical state of college athletes pre-injury to better gauge the athletes’ motivation during baseline testing so that comparisons to post-concussion testing are more accurate.

Theoretically, Rabinowitz’s project promises to expand the understanding of motivational influences on cognitive performance. Clinically, her research has the potential to provide assessors with a tool for increasing the validity of sports-related concussion diagnosis and management—a critically important issue, considering potentially catastrophic outcomes associated with these injuries.

Linking Depression and Parkinson’s Disease

Initially described as a “pure” movement disorder, Parkinson’s disease is now often viewed as a neuropsychiatric condition involving physical, cognitive and psychological symptoms. Depression is one of the most common non-motor side effects of Parkinson’s. Originally thought to be a side effect of decreasing quality of life for those suffering from Parkinson’s, depression is now believed to be a direct consequence of the neurodegenerative process. Preliminary evidence suggests there are distinct depression profiles in Parkinson’s disease featuring fewer “classical” depressive symptoms, such as guilt and suicidal thoughts, and more anxiety and irritability.

Lauren Zahodne of the University of Florida is using her Benton Meier Neuropsychology Scholarship to improve the understanding of Parkinson’s disease depression by examining the prominence of depression components: apathy, anhedonia (the inability to experience joy), and negative affect. This research will help develop more effective treatments for Parkinson’s disease depression, including both psychotherapeutic and pharmacologic interventions.

Recognizing Outstanding Early Career Psychologists

Wendy Johnson, PhD, received the 2010 APF Robert L. Fantz Award, a $2,000 prize for young investigators. “In five short years, Wendy has amassed a record of achievement, impact, and prominence that would justify winning a prestigious mid-career award,” says Matt McGue, PhD, John’s graduate advisor at the University of Minnesota. “I can truly not imagine a more deserving candidate for an award meant to recognize early career scholars in our field.”

Johnson was selected for her remarkable contributions to the areas of behavioral genetics, human cognitive abilities and personality. Since completing her PhD in the Behavioral Genetics and Individual Differences Program at the University of Minnesota in 2005, she has amassed an extensive bibliography, including an influential 2007 Psychological Review (Vol. 114, No. 2) paper in which she advanced an integrated model of the joint effects of genetic and environmental factors.

The Robert L. Fantz Award was established through a bequest from Dr. Robert Fantz, a psychologist at Case Western University whose work on the pattern and spatial visual recognition abilities of infants is well-cited in developmental psychology. The award is presented annually to a promising early career researcher in psychology or related fields. APF gives the award to the winner’s institution to further the award-winner’s research.
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Pay tribute to colleagues, mentors, and loved ones by making a gift to APF. Your generosity ensures the future of psychology and honors the people who have helped make a difference in your life.

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PSYCHOLOGY GIVING SPRING 2011

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APF Scholarships

APF and the Council of Graduate Departments of Psychology (COGDOP) are pleased to announce the 2010–2011 APF/COGDOP Scholarship recipients.

Nansin Li, a fourth-year doctoral student at Yale University, received the $5,000 Harry and Miriam Levinson Scholarship for his proposal, “Rapid Antidepressant Effects of Ketamine.” His work investigates the protein synthesis of ketamine and its resulting impact on brain morphology and behavior in rats.

Adam Smith, a second-year doctoral student at Florida State University, received the $3,000 Ruth G. and Joseph D. Matarazzo Scholarship for his proposal, “Oxytocin Regulation of the Anxiolytic Effects of Social Support to Psychosocial Stress.” Smith’s proposal aims to identify neuroendocrine mechanisms of social support during a stressful experience.

Michael K. Scullin, a fourth-year doctoral student at Washington University, received the $2,000 Clarence J. Rosencrans Scholarship for his proposal, “Understanding Cognitive Declines in Older Adults: Do the Answers Lie in Sleep?” Scullin will investigate whether age-related changes in sleep explain cognitive declines in older adults.

APF awarded ten $1,000 scholarships:

- Konrad Bresin, North Dakota State University
- Aaron Fisher, Penn State University
- Kelsie Forbush, University of Iowa
- Larisa Heiphetz, Harvard University
- Cecilia Martinez-Torteya, Michigan State University
- Ian McDonough, University of Chicago
- Eric Pederson, University of Washington
- Eva Telzer, University of California, Los Angeles
- Jill Waring, Boston College
- Yung-Jui Yang, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Louis Sass, PhD, of Rutgers University, received the 2010 $10,000 APF Joseph B. Gittler Award. The Award provides $10,000 to a psychologist who has made “the most scholarly contribution in the area of philosophical foundations of psychological knowledge.”

Dr. Sass, a Professor (and former Chairperson) in the Department of Clinical Psychology, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, also teaches in the Program in Comparative Literature and is an affiliate of the Center for Cognitive Science. He is the author of Madness and Modernism: Insanity in the Light of Modern Art, Literature, and Thought, and The Paradoxes of Delusion: Wittgenstein, Schreber, and the Schizophrenic Mind, and numerous articles on schizophrenia, phenomenological psychopathology, hermeneutics, modernism/postmodernism, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger.

Appreciating the Philosophy-Psychology Connection

A former president of APA divisions 10 and 24, Dr. Sass has had fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Institute for Advanced Studies, and the Fulbright Foundation. He has been a visiting professor at the universities of Chicago, Copenhagen, Leiden (Holland), Oviedo (Spain), Michoacan (Mexico), and at an Institute of the École Normale Supérieure and CNRS (Paris).

Joseph B. Gittler, a sociologist who held faculty positions at many universities including Duke University, George Mason University and the University of Rochester, made a $250,000 bequest to APF in 2007. Gittler’s own work focused on the experiences of minority populations as well as on the relationships between different racial and religious groups, and he valued philosophy’s role in informing research on these and other issues.

Children and Stress

Few researchers have looked at the effects of chronically low levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Sarah Watamura, PhD, of the University of Denver, aims to change that with her APF Visionary Grant.

Researchers typically do not see many cases of people with low cortisol level. Yet in a study of 120 low-income Denver preschoolers, Watamura found 18 children with potentially dangerously low levels of the hormone. Although these children react behaviorally to stress, they do not respond physiologically. This means that they are not getting the cortisol bump they would need to manage stressful situations.

Watamura is using her $20,000 grant to track these children and re-test their cortisol levels to explore the health and cognitive effects of having low levels of cortisol. She will test whether the deficit is linked to chronic stress. Early findings show that children with low cortisol levels have early signs of depression, anxiety, and delayed physical development.

Watamura will use her results to lobby for these children to receive programs to buffer their stress, including training preschool teachers to help children manage their emotions.
Connie Chan, PhD, Joins APF’s Board

Connie Chan, PhD, was appointed to serve on the APF Board of Trustees. A licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Chan is Associate Dean of the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and presently serves as a faculty supervisor for the Center for Multicultural Training in Psychology at Boston Medical Center and as Chair of the Boston Women’s Fund. Dr. Chan has held several administrative positions at the University of Massachusetts, most recently as Interim Dean of the College of Public and Community Service and Co-Director of the UMass Boston Institute for Asian American Studies from 1993–2003. Professor Chan is the author of the book, If It Runs in the Family: At Risk for Depression (Bantam Books), and has published many book chapters and journal articles on the mental health and health of Asian Americans, and on sexuality and identity among people of color.

“The Foundation is fortunate to have Connie Chan’s expertise, energy and talent on the APF Board,” says Board of Trustees President Dorothy W. Cantor, PsyD.

Dr. Chan is an APA Fellow and has served in several leadership roles in APA, including President of Division 44, Associate Editor for the APA journal Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, and Chair of the Board for Psychology in the Public Interest. She received her BA from Princeton University and her MA and PhD in Clinical Psychology from Boston University.

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If you turned 70½ during 2010 you must start taking the Required Minimum Distribution from your IRA by April 1st of 2011. If you do not need your IRA distribution now, you can roll over your IRA distribution to APF.

The IRA rollover law is a unique opportunity to make a charitable gift tax-free. By using your IRA to make gifts now, you can prepay existing charitable pledges and avoid the IRA withdrawal tax, or you can prepay charitable gifts you may wish to make in the future, and still procure the same tax-free benefits now.

OTHER WAYS TO GIVE: APF offers donors a variety of ways to make gifts

OUTRIGHT GIFTS: APF accepts donations through the mail, online, and by phone (202-336-5843)

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GIFTS OF ROYALTIES: Many psychologists find donating royalties from books, films, psychological tests, and other published materials a quick and easy way to give back.

PLANNED GIFTS: Planned giving is an excellent way to allow you to make larger contributions than are often possible through outright gifts. By making a planned gift to APF you can make a commitment for the future and often receive cost-savings, including tax benefits, today.

For more information about making a gift to the Foundation, contact Claire Meaney at 202-336-5843, or cmeaney@apa.org.

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