The American Psychological Foundation (APF) is opening doors for young psychologists to embark on new discoveries. As federal support continues to dwindle, APF donors are filling the gap with contributions that enable early career psychologists and graduate students to launch their careers with their innovative research and projects that otherwise could go unfunded. Thanks to APF’s donors, the psychologists in this newsletter are able to engage in work to improve lives and the fabric of society.
In 2014, eight exceptional graduate students in child psychology received Elizabeth Munsterberg Koppitz Fellowships to conduct important research and pave the way for their future careers.

**Helping Students Succeed.** Recognizing the limited funding for school reforms, Meghan McCormick, of New York University, is examining social-emotional learning and academic development in children to help educational practitioners identify critical factors related to students’ success.

**Examining How Children Learn.** Caren Walker, a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, is looking at how children learn and reason about the causal structure of the world. In particular, she is interested in how learning occurs in the absence of new data—a phenomenon called “learning by thinking.” Her research can have important theoretical implications for developmental and cognitive sciences and practical implications for improving education and artificial intelligence.

**Understanding Youth Depression.** What are the factors that contribute to depression in youth? Katie Burkhouse, of Binghamton University, is studying the connection among moods, emotions, and reactivity in youth. Ultimately, she hopes to identify risk factors that can be translated to effective treatments for youth depression.

**Helping Children Cope.** Joy Gabrielli, a graduate student at the University of Kansas, will explore risk and protective factors to understand the relationship between a child’s ability to cope with adversity and substance use. Findings from this study will provide a framework for future work designed to target further areas of need and prevention strategies for youth in foster care.

**Treating Adolescent Depression.** In a first-of-its-kind study, Sarah O’Dor of Northwestern University will examine the neurological effects of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) on adolescents suffering from depression.

**Helping Children of Parents with PTSD.** Alissa Jerud, a graduate student at the University of Washington, will study whether children of parents with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) have difficulty distinguishing between threat and safety cues, and whether they have trouble overcoming fear of such cues. Jerud hopes her study will help inform preventive interventions for at-risk families in the future.

**Linking Signs of Distress and Aggressive Behavior.** Kathleen Crum of Florida International University will examine the complex interaction between child attention to distress cues, physiological reactivity to distress cues, anxiety, and aggressive behavior in youth with callous-unemotional (CU) traits. She hopes that this work will contribute to a more sophisticated understanding for assessment and treatment of CU youth.

**Understanding Parent-Adolescent Conflict.** Sarah Thomas, of the University of Maryland College Park, is investigating a neurobiological marker for behavioral disinhibition and its effects on the relationship between parent-adolescent conflict and adolescents’ risk-taking behavior related to substance use. She hopes that her study will enable the accurate assessment of family-level and neurobiological factors that influence substance use, which in turn will inform future prevention efforts.
APF Helps Early Career Psychologists Make a Difference

Understanding Suicide Risk in Adolescents
Catherine Glenn, PhD, wants to help young adults at risk for suicide. Armed with a $5,000 Lizette Peterson-Homer Memorial Injury Research Grant, Glenn, a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University, is examining how adolescent-specific neural patterns relate to suicide risk. She wants to understand the processes leading to self-injurious behaviors in hopes of improving the ability to predict which youth are at greatest risk so that interventions can target at-risk groups.

Addressing Mental Health Needs in Under-served Communities
The mental health needs of Latino communities in rural areas are still grossly underserved. Thanks to a $12,000 APF Pearson Early Career Grant, Araceli Gonzalez, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences at the University of California, Los Angeles, will be able to examine the role of community mental health workers (promotoras) in engaging and assisting in the delivery of an anxiety and depression intervention to low-income Latino families in a rural primary care setting. Dr. Gonzalez hopes to develop a service delivery model that can be uniquely responsive to Latinos in rural areas with limited access to health care.

"The APF Clarence J. Rosecrans Scholarship was undoubtedly a prestigious award that has impacted my career. I was honored to be selected as a recipient. The financial contribution of this award assisted in making my dissertation project feasible, and thus, allowed me to continue to build my translational program of research examining neurobiological, genetic, and environmental influences on eating disorders. I also believe that being a grantee of the APF award allowed me to be more competitive for three other student grants, which provided additional support for the project."
- Kristen Culbert, PhD

Helping ease anxiety for low-income parents
Parental anxiety prevention programs traditionally have been challenged by low participation, especially in underserved communities. In 2011, Nicholas Mian, a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts – Boston, received a $10,000 Elizabeth Munsterberg Kopitz Scholarship to conduct a feasibility study of whether enhanced outreach led to higher levels of participation.

The Kopitz Scholarship allowed Mian to devote an entire semester to completing his dissertation project. He found that parents were 3.5 times more likely to attend an intervention session focused on alleviating anxiety symptoms with enhanced recruitment efforts.

"Carrying out this project changed my approach to preventive intervention research; rather than focusing on the design of the intervention itself, it may be more beneficial to focus on the delivery of the intervention to maximize dissemination in underserved communities," Mian says.

Helping Families Cope with Military Deployment
Forty-seven percent of active duty members of the military have experienced multiple deployments, spending an average of 17 months away from their families. To help these families cope with the stress of these deployments, Aubrey Rodriguez, a Clinical Psychology graduate student at the University of Southern California is using her Randy Gerson Memorial Grant to better understand the links between military service and adolescent problems. She is hoping to identify potential modes of transmitting mental health risk from the civilian parent to the adolescent child.

Rodriguez expects that certain characteristics of their communications will be associated with adolescent problems such as anxiety, depression, and risky behaviors.

"Identifying modifiable communication processes can inform interventions to prevent military-connected adolescents’ behavioral health problems and can provide targets for programs for military families with adolescents,” says Rodriguez. “Findings from this investigation may be a springboard for larger studies of anxiety and depression utilizing novel modes of service delivery.”
APF’s Campaign to Transform the Future aims to ensure that urgent research and projects get launched. Currently, thanks to the generosity of our donors, APF provides more than 70 grants to students and psychologists working on innovative research and projects; however, this is a mere 10% of the applications we receive. APF is striving to open more doors for talented psychologists by closing the funding gap.

We hope you will continue to support APF as we strive to reach our goal of raising $6.5 million.
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