The overriding aim of the USC Family Studies Project is to identify factors that contribute to vulnerability and resilience in children and adolescents, and that ultimately inform interventions. We study family violence and conflict, which not only are remarkably common, but also are associated with psychological symptoms, compromised health, and poor academic performance. Yet not all violence-exposed youth have problems, and we are curious what protects certain youth. Moreover, violence within families fluctuates over time and we want to understand what triggers its escalation and de-escalation.

Does family conflict and aggression affect the way individuals respond to other stressful events? Over the years, our data have provided several examples where children exposed to family violence had attenuated responses to another serious life event, e.g., the Northridge earthquake. On the other hand, one of our recent studies shows that youth exposed to family violence also are at increased risk for community violence with dose-response effects for cumulative violence exposure.

Our longitudinal study initially recruited families with a 9-10 year-old child and now is assessing these same “kids” at ages 17-18. Family discussions are replaced by discussions with a friend on topics such as dating and future aspirations. We are studying whether earlier violence exposure influences the content and tone of these discussions and predicts high-risk behaviors, including substance use and aggression in romantic relationships. Not surprisingly, we are finding that text messaging and postings on social networks have opened up new avenues for peer and dating aggression. Our current data will explore whether violence exposure in childhood disrupts educational, occupational, and relational transitions in young adulthood.
**Did You Know?**

- **Dr. Bosco Tjan** has been appointed to the NSF review panel for the Cognitive Neuroscience Program.

- **Elizabeth Chereji** (Advisor, Dr. Carol Prescott) recently received an NSF grant to attend the NSF 2009 Post-doctoral Institute at the University of Texas at El Paso, on September 24 through 26. She was also awarded an EDGE travel grant.

- **Dr. Richard Thompson** is traveling to the South Pole as a member of the National Science Board to visit NSF research projects ongoing at the South Pole.

- **Dr. Bosco Tjan** has been awarded supplementary funding by the National Eye Institute of NIH towards a major upgrade of the MRI scanner at the Dornsife Center. The upgrade, estimated to cost just under $470,000, will equip the scanner with a top-of-the-line 32-channel head coil, which will boost the signal-to-noise ratio by a factor of five compared to the best of our existing coils. The upgrade will also add capabilities for measuring functional perfusion without any contrast agent and to perform online evaluation of diffusion-weighed imaging and white-matter fiber tracking. The upgrade will be completed by the end of this year and will be available to all users.

- **Carlos Rodriguez** (Advisor, Dr. Margaret Gatz) received a 2 1/2 year predoctoral NRSA titled “A fotonovela for improved dementia literacy among Latinos”.

- **Charisse Corsbie-Massay** (Advisor, Dr. Stephen Read), **Elizabeth Chereji** (Advisor, Dr. Carol Prescott) and **Lauren Ng** (Advisor, Dr. Stanley Huey, Jr.), were recently selected to attend the Compact for Faculty Diversity-Teaching & Mentoring Institute in Arlington, Virginia on 10/22-10/25. They will all receive an EDGE grant to attend the Institute.

**Have You Read Anything Good Lately?**


  *One of the images from the above article was chosen as the cover image for the journal cover (for this specific issue) of Vision Research (see image on left).*


*Full articles are posted outside SGM 538. Please send your newest/best publications to Twyla Ponton, ponton@usc.edu*
WELCOME NEW Research Staff—2009

Kristen Fong  
Project Specialist  
Prescott Lab

Diana Bennett  
Project Coordinator,  
Margolin Family Studies Project

Eleanor Tate  
Project Specialist,  
Wendy Wood Lab

Yvonne Paredes-Alexander  
Project Manager,  
Hennigan Lab,  
Center for Research on Crime

Aids Walk:  October 18, GASP joins GPSS. Got questions? Email Carlyn at ccarter@usc.edu.

Next GASP committee meeting: Thursday, October 29  2-3pm, SGM 514 (open to all)

For up-to-date department calendar items visit:  
http://college.usc.edu/psyc/around_the_department/departmental-calendar.cfm