



NEW MAJORITIES, SHIFTING PRIORITIES

DIFFERENCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS
IN THE 21ST CENTURY ACADEMY



february 2011

CSWupdate

Director's Commentary
BY KATHLEEN MCHUGH

Conference Preview

**When Letting Go
of Goals Works**
BY ELIZABETH THOMPSON

**Diary of a Graduate
Student**
BY LEILA PAZARGADI

**Breast Milk Banking
in the U.S., 1910 to
the present**
BY MARISA GERSTEIN PINEAI

**Exploding Expectation
in Stand-up Comedy
by Women of Color**
BY CHRISTIE NITTROUER

**The Benefits of
Supporting Others**
BY TRISTEN INAGAKI

Keep it Green!

Staff

Face Time

When the Executive Editor of MS magazine, Katherine Spillar, told me that former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi had *never* been featured on a *Time* or *Newsweek* magazine cover, I have to confess I did not believe her. Surely she must mean that Pelosi had never been the Person of the Year. A quick Internet search confirmed Spillar's point. Though neither magazine had celebrated the first woman in U.S. history to be third in line to the U.S. presidency, the first to sit, as Pelosi has, in rooms, deliberations, and meetings where no woman had ever sat before, they both put John Boehner on their covers after he succeeded her as Speaker. What is going on here? Covers of magazines are important because many more people see them than buy or read the magazine itself. The faces on

the cover are in out in front of us, visible to any passersby or visitor to a waiting room. To follow up on who gets Face Time and who doesn't, I decided to see who *Time* magazine has honored over the years on its Person of the Year Cover. The results, though predictable, are depressing. Since 1965, the magazine has featured 43 men, 33 of them white. Often, these covers were shared by two men, such as 1983's selection of Ronald Reagan and Yuri Andropov, 1972's couple of the year, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger, or 1998's Bill Clinton and Kenneth Starr. Over the same period, *Time* dedicated only one Person of the Year cover to an individual woman: Corazon Aquino in 1986. Woman have been featured in or as a group 3 times: in 1975's cover on U.S. Women, in 2002's

homage to the Women Whistleblowers Against Enron, Worldcom, and the FBI, and in the middle of 2005's philanthropy sandwich featuring Bono, Melinda and Bill Gates. There have actually been more covers (6) devoted to nonspecific entities than to women: Young People, 1966, The Middle Class, 1969, the Computer 1982, the Endangered Earth 1988, the American Soldier 2003, and "You" 2006.

Until it gives more face time to women, I have cancelled my subscription to *Time* magazine.

- Kathleen McHugh

NEW MAJORITIES, SHIFTING PRIORITIES

CONFERENCE PREVIEW

DIFFERENCE AND DEMOGRAPHICS IN THE 21ST CENTURY ACADEMY

REIMAGINING THE ROLE OF WOMEN'S,
GENDER, SEXUALITY, LGBT, ETHNIC, RACE,
AND POSTCOLONIAL STUDIES IN AN ERA
OF SHRINKING BUDGETS

IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE, higher education has experienced budget cuts and radical reorganizations that have called into question the relevancy of women's, gender, sexuality, LGBT, ethnic, race, and postcolonial studies in the academy. Programs and departments that have traditionally housed these areas of study are being threatened with closure or heavy cutbacks.

New Majorities, Shifting Priorities: Difference and Demographics in the 21st Century Academy, a one-day conference organized by the UCLA Center for the Study of Women in conjunction with the NYU Center for the Study of Gender and Sexuality, will address some of these issues with the help of some thoughtful and engaged scholars. Taking place on Friday, March 4, from 9 am to 5 pm in room 314 of UCLA's Royce Hall,

the conference aims to address the challenges facing women's, gender, sexuality, LGBT, ethnic, race and postcolonial studies in the academy. We will attempt to create a response to such challenges by bringing together experts in these fields that will develop, in two roundtable sessions, new and innovative arguments for the continuation of curricular programs and research centers devoted to women's, sexuality, gender, LGBT, ethnic, race, and postcolonial studies. The discussions will focus on these programs at both an institutional level as well as a research and curriculum level.

The morning roundtable will feature Lisa Duggan, Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis at NYU; Rod Ferguson, Chair and Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota; Inderpal Grewal, Chair and Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality studies at Yale University; Laura Kang, Chair and Associate Professor of Women's Studies and Associate Professor of Comparative Literature and English at UC Irvine; Sarita See, Associate Professor of English at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; and Sandra Soto, Associate Professor of Gender and Women's Studies at the University of Arizona. The aim of this panel is to articulate forward-thinking, broad, and affirmative new visions for these research areas in the twenty-first century. The panel participants will offer their intellec-

tual, pedagogical, and political visions of these fields and reimagine the place of these areas of study within the academy. Some of the questions each panelist will consider include: How are these fields of study central to the academic mission? How should they be situated in relation to the humanities, social sciences, professional education?

The afternoon roundtable will consist of a focused approach to envisioning the best institutional structures, arrangements, and relationships among units that teach and foster research in the fields of women's, gender, sexuality, LGBT, race and postcolonial studies. Based on the expertise of the panel participants, they will articulate what the ideal institutional arrangements or structures could look like. The participants will attempt to address the following questions: how would you institutionalize gender, women's, sexuality, LGBT, postcolonial and ethnic studies? How could the university be structured to make these areas central rather than marginal to the academic mission? The panel participants will also focus on the challenges facing their own institutions and/ or the higher education system as a whole—from contingent labor and the reduction of ladder faculty positions, to the student as a consumer model, to the new metrics through which universities and their corporate guardians are assessing what

works and what doesn't. In the face of these shifts, this panel will ruminate on the potential institutional or structural arguments that these fields are especially positioned to offer as counter to the corporatized university.

The experts comprising this panel are Laura Briggs, Professor of Women's Studies and Associate Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Arizona; Kathleen McHugh, Professor of English, Cinema, and Media Studies at UCLA and Director of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women; Angela Riley, Professor of Law at UCLA and Director of the UCLA American Indian Studies Center; Jenny Sharpe, Professor of English and Comparative Literature at UCLA; and Kathryn B. Stockton, Director of Gender Studies and Professor of English at the University of Utah.

Please join us for a day of insight and innovation for the future of the fields of research and study we hold dear. The conference begins at 9 am and continues until 5 pm at Royce 314. The conference is free and open to the public. RSVPs are closed but some space may be available. Email cswpubs@csw.ucla.edu for info. For more information on the panelists, visit www.csw.ucla.edu/events/new-majorities-shifting-priorities.

NEVER GIVE UP?

When Letting Go of Goals Works

BY ELIZABETH THOMPSON

Research across different illness contexts has demonstrated that goal adjustment, defined as disengaging from a blocked goal and reengaging in new or pre-existing goals, is an adaptive process that is associated with psychological and physical well-being.

SPEND A MOMENT REFLECTING ON some of your important life goals. They may be career-oriented goals, such as earning a degree or publishing a manuscript, or they may be interpersonal goals, such as finding a partner or having a child. They may be related to an avocational interest, such as running a marathon or planting a garden, or they may be financial goals, such as buying a home or saving for a vacation. Once you have your goals in mind, identify one goal that is particularly meaningful to you right now.

Now, imagine that you are told that you have a chronic illness or condition that will prevent you from achieving this goal. In addition to any medical treatments, emotional repercussions, and

financial burden that you must endure because of this condition, you must adjust to the reality that it is highly unlikely that you will achieve your goal, given physical limitations or the need to prioritize resources. Your illness will not only add challenges to your daily life, but it will also impede your ability to achieve this cherished goal.

ADJUSTING TO GOAL BLOCKAGE

Given this punishing circumstance, is it more adaptive for you to keep striving for your goal, or to give up on it? Will holding on to your goal allow you to maintain a sense of purpose and identity, or will it lead to frustration and disappointment? At what point do you abandon your goal and decide to put effort towards alternative goals? If you were the mental health

professional or physician working with an individual in this situation, would you advise her to hold on to her goal, or would you aim to facilitate the adoption of more feasible goals?

While healthy adults report giving up on average one goal per year (Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz & Carver, 2003); living with a chronic illness often causes considerable interference with primary life goals. Research across different illness contexts has demonstrated that goal adjustment, defined as disengaging from a blocked goal and reengaging in new or pre-existing goals, is an adaptive process that is associated with psychological and physical well-being (Wrosch, 2011). In contrast, dogged goal pursuit in the face of goal blockage has been associated with

a variety of negative outcomes, including depressive symptoms, dysregulation of the stress hormone cortisol, and indication of chronic inflammation (Miller & Wrosch, 2007; Wrosch, et al., 2003).

Along with Professor Annette Stanton of the Department of Psychology, I am examining goal adjustment in the context of chronic health stressors. In our first study with 114 women with metastatic breast cancer (Thompson, Stanton & Bower, 2011), 78% reported having given up a cherished life goal since their diagnosis. These goals ranged from starting a family, to finishing a degree, to walking the family dog around the block each night. Women who endorsed a greater ability to disengage from their blocked goal and reengage with alternative goals reported greater life satisfaction, greater sense of purpose, and fewer cancer-related intrusive thoughts than women who reported low goal adjustment abilities. This finding suggests that being able to focus on alternative goals in the face of goal blockage is adaptive.

WHEN THE GOAL IS BIOLOGICAL PARENTHOOD

We collaborated with Dr. Julia Woodward of the Duke University Fertility Center to examine the process of goal adjustment in women and couples receiving treatment for infertility (Thompson, Woodward & Stanton, in press; Thompson, Woodward & Stanton, 2011). Although having a child

is a major life goal for many individuals, more than 10% of married couples confront infertility (Abma, Chandra, Mosher, Peterson, & Piccinino, 1997). Infertility is defined as the inability to conceive a child after one year of engaging regularly in unprotected sexual intercourse (Mosher & Pratt, 1982). When the goal of biological parenthood is obstructed, frequently after years of trying to prevent conception, partners often experience considerable psychological distress (Clark, Henry, & Taylor, 1991; Greil, 1997). Researchers have noted that resolving the tension between goal striving and acceptance of infertility may be one of the most arduous tasks faced by couples (Clark et al., 1991). In a culture that reveres perseverance and determination, when is it adaptive for a couple to disengage from the goal of biological parenthood and invest in other meaningful goals? Do partners generally share the same appraisals of goal blockage? How does one partner's process of goal adjustment influence the other partner's well-being? As a mental health professional or physician working with couples facing infertility, how do you promote realistic appraisals of the likelihood of pregnancy, navigate differences in partners' appraisals, foster goal adjustment, and bolster marital relationship quality during the experience of treatment for infertility?

We first examined goal adjustment processes in a sample of 97 women re-

Women who endorsed a greater ability to disengage from their blocked goal and reengage with alternative goals reported greater life satisfaction, greater sense of purpose, and fewer cancer-related intrusive thoughts than women who reported low goal adjustment abilities.

For women who reported maintaining the goal of biological parenthood, having additional goals in other domains was psychologically protective.

ceiving treatment for infertility. Women who reported higher levels of disengagement from the goal of biological parenthood and engagement with pre-existing goals evidenced better adjustment (fewer depressive and anxiety symptoms, as well as greater positive mood) than women reporting low goal disengagement and engagement. For women who reported maintaining the goal of biological parenthood, having additional goals in other domains was psychologically protective. Women who endorsed high engagement with pre-existing goals in areas such as careers or relationships experienced more positive moods and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety as they pursued these goals than women who reported a lack of alternative goals.

Role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1977) posits that having multiple valued

roles is protective for women's mental and physical health, and empirical data support this theory (Barnett, 2004; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). Heckhausen, Wrosch, & Schulz (2010) highlight the protective value of goal diversity and posit that maintaining varied goals is a critical facet of adaptive goal pursuit. Our data support these theories by indicating that engagement with goals outside the parenthood domain is protective against the development of depressive symptoms and anxiety and promotes positive emotions during a chronic health stressor.

Impetus for pursuing an alternate goal may be pre-existing and spontaneous, or it may be provoked by goal blockage. For example, one woman facing infertility might focus on meaningful career goals, whereas another woman might have anticipated that motherhood would constitute

her career and develop specific vocational goals only in the wake of infertility. Redirecting attention to existing goals may be less taxing and more immediately rewarding than deliberately identifying new goals or intentionally reviving prior goals. Our data indicate that reengaging with a pre-existing goal is more strongly associated with positive adjustment than is adopting a new goal specifically in response to goal blockage.

WHEN THE GOAL IS SHARED: FROM THE INTERPERSONAL TO THE INTRAPERSONAL

As facing infertility is most often a dyadic stressor, we also examined goal appraisal in 37 married couples receiving treatment for infertility ((Thompson et al., 2011). We asked partners to assess their level of experienced goal blockage ("How blocked do you feel in your goal of becoming a par-

Although clinicians may be inclined to focus on an identified stressor, like infertility, and the individual's response to that particular stressor, assessing and promoting life goals in unrelated domains may be an effective way to counter the frustration and loss associated with threatened goals.

ent?”), perceived goal attainability (“How likely do you think it is that you [or your partner] will become pregnant?” which was answered from 0-100%), and goal importance. Based on previous research, we hypothesized that partners’ psychological adjustment to infertility would be significantly associated with their own goal appraisals and their partner’s goal appraisals.

We found that goal appraisal variables were moderately correlated within partners. Although women reported significantly higher goal blockage and lower expectations for attaining pregnancy than men, partners did not differ on the importance of becoming a parent. For both women and men, higher goal blockage was associated with more symptoms of depression. Surprisingly, couples’ goal appraisals were not correlated with their number of unsuccessful treatment attempts, suggesting that additional factors beyond treatment failures play a significant role in how couples assess their chances of conception. Overall, women demonstrated more distress than their partners, which is consistent with previous research on infertile couples.

Women’s well-being was related to both their own goal appraisals as well as their partners’, whereas men’s adjustment was related solely to their own goal appraisals. This finding is in line with other work that suggests that women are more affected

by their partners’ perceptions of infertility than men, whose distress tends to be primarily influenced by their own perceptions of infertility (Benyamini, Gozlan, & Kokia, 2009).

Greater perceived chance of becoming pregnant was protective for women, but their partners’ high rating of pregnancy likelihood was associated with higher distress in women. If a woman believes that her partner is overly optimistic about her becoming pregnant, she may experience his confidence as invalidating or burdensome. A partner’s efforts to exude confidence, as may be his socially prescribed role, may be perceived as not fully appreciating the demands of a treatment cycle or the challenges of conceiving. Incongruence of appraisals between partners may leave one partner feeling isolated in her concern. Other studies have found significant interactions between women’s and men’s perceptions of infertility that support the hypothesis that women are prone to distress when their partners perceive infertility as less serious than they do (Benyamini et al., 2009).

TRANSLATING RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

Implications from these findings include the value of asking individuals facing chronic medical stressors about their goals that are threatened, perceived chance for goal attainment, and additional goals that are important to them. Although clinicians

may be inclined to focus on an identified stressor, like infertility, and the individual's response to that particular stressor, assessing and promoting life goals in unrelated domains may be an effective way to counter the frustration and loss associated with threatened goals.

Ideally, our research will inform effective interventions designed to facilitate goal adjustment, which will provide opportunities for life satisfaction and the sense of purpose that accompany striving towards attainable goals. Future studies should incorporate diverse groups to expand generalizability and to examine potential differences across subsamples. In a world where many potential roadblocks to goal achievement exist, including health conditions, disabilities, socioeconomic limitations, or unexpected life events, this line of research has relevance to all of us as motivated beings. We hope it will benefit society through broadening opportunities and increasing psychological well-being and physical health for women and men confronting disadvantages and hardships that result in unattainable life goals.

Elizabeth Thompson is a doctoral student in the Clinical and Health areas of the Department of Psychology at UCLA. She received CSW's Elizabeth Blackwell, M.D., award in 2010.

REFERENCES

- Abma, J.C., Chandra, A., Mosher, W.D., Peterson, L.S., & Piccinino, L.J. (1997). *Fertility, family planning, and women's health: New data from the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth*. National Center for Health Statistics. *Vital and Health Statistics*, 23, 1-114.
- Barnett, R.C. (2004). Women and multiple roles: Myths and realities. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 12, 158-163.
- Benyamini, Y., Gozlan, M., & Kokia, E. (2009). Women's and men's perceptions of infertility and their associations with psychological adjustment: A dyadic approach. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 14, 1-16.
- Clark, L.F., Henry, S. M., & Taylor, D. M. (1991). Cognitive examination of motivation for childbearing as a factor in adjustment to infertility. In A. L. Stanton & C. Dunkel-Schetter (Eds.), *Infertility: Perspectives from stress and coping research* (pp. 157-180). New York: Plenum Press.
- Heckhausen J., Wrosch C., & Schulz R. (2010). A motivational theory of life-span development. *Psychological Review*, 117, 32-60.
- Greil, A. L. (1997). Infertility and psychological distress: A critical review of the literature. *Social Science and Medicine*, 45, 1679-1704.
- Mosher, W. D. & Pratt, W. F. (1982). *Reproductive impairments among married couples: United States*. Maryland: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Health Research, Statistics, and Technology, National Center for Health Statistics.
- Ruderman, M.N., Ohlott, P.J., Panzer, K. & King, S. (2002). *Benefits of multiple roles for managerial women*. *Academy of Management Journal*, 45, 369-383.
- Siebert, S. D. (1974). Toward a theory of role accumulation. *American Sociological Review*, 39, 567-578.
- Thompson, E. H., Stanton, A. L., & Bower, J. E. (2011). A longitudinal examination of goal disengagement and goal reengagement as adaptive self-regulation processes in women with metastatic breast cancer. Manuscript in preparation.
- Thompson, E. H., Woodward, J. T., & Stanton, A. L. (in press). Moving forward during major goal blockage: Situational goal adjustment in women facing infertility. *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*.
- Thompson, E. H., Stanton, A. L., & Woodward, J. T. (2011). Dyadic goal appraisal during treatment for infertility: How do different perspectives relate to partners' adjustment? Manuscript submitted for publication.
- Wrosch, C. (2011). Self-regulation of unattainable goals and pathways to quality of life. In S. Folkman (Ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of Stress, Health, and Coping* (pp. 319-333). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Wrosch, C., Miller, G. F., Scheier, M. F., & de Pontet, S. B. (2007). Giving up on unattainable goals: Benefits for health? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 251-263.
- Wrosch, C., Scheier, M. F., Miller, G. E., Schulz, R., & Carver, C. S. (2003). Adaptive self-regulation of unattainable goals: goal disengagement, Goal reengagement, and subjective well-being. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29, 1494-1508.

Diary of a Graduate Student

THE SEASONAL MUSINGS OF AN ASPIRING ACADEMIC

It was like the Oscars. I found myself on a podium accepting a teaching award from a distinguished group of professors and community member all-stars, thanking everyone from the academy (of academics) to my family for setting me on a path towards vocational fulfillment and personal growth. Sound like a plug advertising the merits of teaching? Well, it is. As professors in training, my graduate school colleagues and I are in a unique position to help transition undergraduates to a more collegiate atmosphere. With one leg lazily dangling in the world of perpetual student-hood and the other

busily pacing in the realm of pedagogical training, grading, office hours and departmental meetings, as graduate students, we are in-between. Able to empathize with both students and professors, we can take a more holistic approach to fostering the student/professor dynamic, even making friends of the students we mentor.

Spring 2010

But, back to the award that changed my life. It was last spring that the Center for the Study of Women honored me with the Constance Coiner Award for teaching students about my research on Middle

Eastern and Muslim women writers immigrating to the U.S. The award recognizes a commitment to instructing undergraduates about gender and class issues in celebration of Constance Coiner, the much accomplished UCLA Ph.D. and author of Better Red: The Writing and Resistance of Tillie Olsen and Meridel Le Sueur, who tragically died in the 1996 TWA plane crash, alongside her daughter, Anna Duarte Coiner. Truthfully, I was so stunned to receive an award in her honor, and amongst so many other talented women at the ceremony, that in the moment, I didn't anticipate the many doors that it would later open for me.

Just after the ceremony, Mr. Santiago Bernal approached me from the Academic Advancement Program (a program for which I have had the privilege of teaching these past three summers) to meet with a group of visiting educators from South Africa and the Netherlands. These universities were setting up similar programs to AAP in their respective countries and using AAP as a teaching model. If you are unfamiliar with AAP, it is a multiracial program, which dedicates itself to assisting, mentoring, instructing and retaining students from underrepresented and underprivileged backgrounds at UCLA. Most of my students from past years were the first from their families to attend university and/or to overcome numerous obstacles in the pursuit of their college education. My experience has shown me that most of these students were anxious to break through racial barriers and my summer course discussing postcolonial fiction, ethnic-American identity, and racial prejudice became an extremely personal experience for us all.

This is precisely what the South Africans and Dutch wanted to achieve through their sister programs, which continue to promote equality and educational opportunity for first generation

minorities in their respective countries. The goal is to foster cross-cultural dialogue between a country's majority population and its minority groups. During my summer class, we often found common ground as ethnic Americans and talked about what it meant to be American in a post-9/11 world defined by the Patriot Act, military campaigns, and economic turmoil.

Though AAP addresses and assists all underrepresented minorities, most of my students had been Latina/os and African Americans. I always wondered what it would be like to teach a classroom of students who came from a similar background as my own; whose parents emigrated to North America or Western Europe from a Middle Eastern and/or Muslim country, as mine did. Last summer, I was given that chance. After I met with the visiting Dutch administrators from the Vrije University in Amsterdam, I worked with the very dedicated Associate Director of AAP, Donald Wasson, to create and orchestrate a new opportunity to guest lecture for the Dutch program via satellite during the initiation of their program.

Summer 2010

During the beginning of the summer, I spent many Skype sessions with my Dutch contact and now good friend, Gusta, to plan my guest lecture in her class. Because my daily composition course for AAP's Freshman Summer Program conflicted with the duration of the VU class, I Skyped in the mornings before my own course began. I lectured twice for her class: the first session briefly introduced the key concepts of Edward Said's Orientalism and the second discussed Arab-American writer, Mohja Kahf's poetic works. The students, primarily from North Africa, showed much interest in reading about the Muslim American experience, and especially engaged me about my experiences, which I had not anticipated. My Iranian heritage informs my research about Middle Eastern women's autobiographies and inspires discussions about hybridized identity in the U.S. During the question-and-answer portion of my final lecture, I exchanged stories with the students from Vrije, wherein I discovered that we shared comparable experiences and similar perspectives. I was touched by their personal accounts and questions, which mostly dealt with Euro-American anxieties

about Muslims. Additionally, since my course discussed auto/biographical narratives, both my students and the Dutch students interviewed each other through email, social networking sites, and instant messaging programs to write a biographical essay about their partner. Many of the Vrije students talked about how they struggled to integrate and adapt to Dutch culture, or about prejudice against Muslims, while others spoke about new friends and opportunities they encountered. But what surprised most of my students was how much they had in common with their Vrije partners, though they did not share the same ethnicity, religion, or national identity.

Fall 2010

The success of our collaborative efforts inspired Gusta, Donald, and I to plan a second exchange between UCLA and Vrije University instructors and students in the summer of 2011. I still hear from some of the first-generation Dutch students on occasion and marvel at their strength and determination to dispel racial and religious prejudices. After many discussions with Gusta and her students, it became clear that the Netherlands still has some ways to go in terms of racial equality and social acceptance of its minorities (but then

again, so do we). I admire my friend for taking on this challenge, as it is an ongoing fight not just for her in her country but for us in ours as well.

Winter 2011

After several years of teaching, each moment still feels electrifying and the impetus to create a unique experience in my class motivates me to draw on my many selves: the aspiring academic, the graduate student, the painter, the college radio DJ, the musician, the yoga enthusiast, and the avid world traveler, to thread my personal experiences and reflections into the fabric of my courses. Just as my teaching style incorporates the facets of my life, it also draws upon the sum of my experiences. Without the Constance Coiner Award, Mr. Bernal would have never approached me precisely during the time the Dutch educators were visiting. Without that recognition, I would not have met my now-dear friend Gusta, with whom I have had the pleasure of exchanging pedagogical experiences, strategies, and philosophies. Because of my interaction with the diverse, first-generation Dutch students at Vrije University last summer, I was impassioned to design and teach a course for the Comparative Literature Department this term, entitled *Comedic*

Masks, Tragic Faces: Investigating Arab and Iranian Immigrant Women's Life Narratives, which features my dissertation research about Middle Eastern women writers. Currently, with protests spreading from North Africa to the Middle East, the class is turning into a dynamic and organic experience inspired by the headlines. What motivates contemporary forms of resistance and revolution and how are they sustained? Twenty students and I are determined to find out.

Leila Pazargadi advanced to candidacy and received her concentration in Women's Studies in the spring of 2009. Her dissertation discusses the comparative works of Iranian American and Arab American women writers who are publishing autobiographical fiction and nonfiction in a post-9/11 America.

FROM COMMODITY TO DONATION

Breast Milk Banking in the United States, 1910 to the present

BY MARISA GERSTEIN PINEAU



IN 1908, DR. FRITZ TALBOT, a physician from Massachusetts, spent three days riding streetcars in Boston looking for wet-nurses for a sick infant under his care. Talbot later lamented that he had “traveled many miles” and wasted a great deal of time hunting for wet nurses during his early career (Talbot, 1913:760). In 1910 he took decisive action: he opened the Directory for Wet-Nurses, the first institutions dedicated to providing human milk to needy infants and the prototype for the modern-day breast milk bank.

At the turn of the twentieth century, physicians and public health advocates became increasingly alarmed by a sharp decline in maternal breastfeeding (Wolf, 2001). In the seventeenth century, most American mothers breastfed through their babies’ second summer, and as late as the eighteenth century, women were encour-

aged to nurse for at least one year (Apple, 1987; Wolf, 2001:9). But by the 1890s many mothers were weaning their infants by the end of the third month and may have begun supplementing breastfeeding with cow’s milk or other foods even before then (Wolf, 2001:9).

This decline in maternal breastfeeding and the use of cow’s milk and other foods threatened the gains in infant health in this era, and doctors began searching for solutions. One obvious remedy for lack of maternal breastfeeding was wet nursing. Since ancient times, wet nursing was a commodified service, and breast milk is perhaps the earliest example of a commodified bodily product. Although wet nursing was never widespread in America, it was used in cases of maternal death or illness, and was more common in the American South, where enslaved black women nursed their

masters’ children (Fildes, 1988:128,141; Golden, 1996:25-26)

However, wet nursing was problematic. Most wet nurses were women from the margins of society: poor, often unmarried, and therefore morally suspect. Wet nurses were difficult to locate, and once found, were often “hard to manage” (Chapin, 1923:201). Respectable families did not want wet nurses in their homes, and the wet nurses’ own infants were often boarded out, where, deprived of their mothers’ milk, they quickly perished.

In response to these complex problems of health and morality, Talbot opened the Directory for Wet-Nurses. The Directory’s mission was twofold: “1) To supply people with Wet-Nurses, and 2) To give destitute girls with babies, an opportunity to earn an honest living” (Speech Read at Havenhill, Mass., Fall 1912, Talbot papers at the

Countway Medical Library, Box 2). In addition to wet nurses, the Directory provided “drawn” breast milk, expressed by the wet nurses, bottled, and sold to hospitals and families for 25 cents per ounce.

The Directory was very much a product of its time, rooted in Progressive Era ideals, and activism, and early twentieth century ideologies about mothering and women’s roles. But it also provided the foundation for a new model of breast milk provision, one that reflects the changing value of breast milk over the course of the twenty-first century. My analysis of breast milk banking allows me to trace the evolution of breast milk from a commodity to a gift.

Capitalist economies have a unique ability to transform goods, services, and even human labor and bodies into commodities (Marx 1867; Lukacs 1923). For instance, life insurance puts a monetary value on human life (Zelizer 1985), while reproductive tissues are now exchanged via international markets (Almeling 2007). But although there are examples of bodily tissues that defy commodification, such as organs (Healy 2006), few originate as commodities and then become gifts. One notable exception is human blood (Titmuss 1971), but unlike breast milk blood was commodified for only a short period during the twentieth century. Yet the process by which breast



Established in 1974 the Mother's Milk Bank of San Jose is currently the oldest operating milk bank in the U.S.

milk, commodified for centuries, was “giftified” remains unexplained, even by those who note this progression (Golden 1996, Swanson 2009).

The “giftification” of banked breast milk did not happen overnight. When Talbot established the first breast milk bank in Boston in 1910, he treated breast milk as it was treated historically: as a commodity purchased from poor women. Breast milk banks established since the 1970s, on the other hand, rely on an altruistic model in which women donate their excess breast milk without recompense.

I believe that the shift from milk sellers to donors, and the continuation of this system of milk banking, is connected to three larger trends in American society. First, changes in women’s employment provided alternate forms of employment to poor mothers who previously sold their milk, forcing the banks to rely on donors, who were usually middle-class homemakers. Eventually, the increase in middle-class mother’s employment expanded the breast milk supply, as mothers began expressing milk at work. Second, the rise of the ideology of intensive motherhood, in which motherhood is “child-centered, emotionally-absorbing, and labor-intensive” (Hays 1996:8), became the dominant ideology of motherhood in the mid-twentieth century. Breastfeeding is a central component of this ideology, and breast milk, increasingly rare in the face of declining breastfeeding

rates, came to embody the virtue of “good mothering” (Blum 1996).

Finally, changes in technology, including improvements in breast pumps, refrigeration, medical testing, and shipping, made collection and storage of breast milk easier and more convenient, while the creation of “safe” infant formulas led to steep decline in breastfeeding rates. Technological advances therefore made breast milk easier to collect and package but increasingly rare and special, thus altering breast milk’s cultural meaning. These three trends altered banks’ organizational model, creating a system reliant on donors rather than sellers. This shift demonstrates that economic and social changes, including women’s increased labor market attachment, advances in technology, and the rise of modern mothering ideologies, which typically promote commodification under capitalism, can paradoxically sacralize previously commodified products.

My dissertation examines the de-commodification of banked breast milk using breast milk banks from three eras as case studies: Boston’s Directory for Wet-Nurses, established in 1910 as the first milk bank in the United States and operating until 1962; the Mothers’ Milk Bank of San Francisco, established by the AAW in 1948 and operating until 1978; and the Mother’s Milk Bank of San Jose, established in 1974 and currently the oldest operating milk bank in the U.S.

Finally, changes in technology, including improvements in breast pumps, refrigeration, medical testing, and shipping, made collection and storage of breast milk easier and more convenient, while the creation of “safe” infant formulas led to steep decline in breastfeeding rates.

...milk selling provided "honorable" employment to poor and unmarried mothers who had few alternatives and allowed them to keep their own infants while they earned a living.

For the first era, beginning in 1910, I use articles, speeches, and correspondence about the Directory for Wet Nurses found in the personal papers of its founder, Dr. Fritz Talbot. Analysis of these papers indicates, as I hypothesized, that women's employment opportunities, advances in technology, and ideologies about motherhood influenced early breast-milk banking.

First, milk selling provided "honorable" employment to poor and unmarried mothers who had few alternatives and allowed them to keep their own infants while they earned a living. Although the Directory eventually shifted to purchasing breast milk from married working-class women in the home, the payment was a substantial supplement to the family income. Milk selling allowed mothers who had few employment opportunities outside the home to purchase household goods, pay for children's education, and, in at least one case, buy a house. The founder of the Detroit Mothers' Milk Bureau, Dr. Raymond Hoobler (1927:1787) described milk selling as "building up a new profession for woman—that of a producer of human milk," one that "in no way interferes with her duties of housewife and mother, and exposes her in no way to the public view."

Second, the physical separation of milk sellers from their milk and its treatment as medicine removed the taint of immorality associated with wet nursing

thus, reconciling the Directory's work with the ideal of "sacred" motherhood in this era. It also allowed married mothers to discreetly earn an income while maintaining their "rightful place" in the home.

Finally, medical and technological advances were key to this disembodiment and medicalization of breast milk. New breast milk technologies made it easier for women to express milk, while the development of bacteriological testing allowed doctors to screen milk sellers for disease. The development of refrigeration meant clinics and hospitals could store and preserve breast milk, creating a therapeutic product easily controlled and administered by doctors.

Therefore in 1910, limited employment opportunities for women, new technologies, and prevalent mothering ideologies contributed to the ongoing commodification of banked breast milk in this period. Lower-income women continued to earn a living selling their milk, while the process of disembodiment freed the milk from the moral ambiguities of wet-nursing, creating a viable therapeutic commodity.

For the second period, 1945 to 1978, I am using records from the Mothers' Milk Bank of San Francisco archived at the California Historical Society. These materials include the administrative and financial records for the bank, fundraising and program records, reports to the Board, statistical and nurses' reports, and donor

and recipient rolls beginning with the first donations in 1948 to the final donations in 1977.

Like the Boston Directory, the San Francisco Mothers' Milk Bank followed the American Academy of Pediatrics' 1943 standards for milk banks. Payment was intended to ensure donors' "good standards of living and relief from financial worry" (American Academy of Pediatrics, 1943:113). However, although the San Francisco milk bank paid women for milk, they referred to the sellers as "donors" and paid them the same amount (10 cents per ounce) for thirty years. Analysis of the records indicates that this payment became increasingly symbolic as the value of the payment fell and as bank managers came to consider milk "donation" a charitable service, not a means of employment. Notably, in the 1970s the San Francisco bank also began to receive milk from working mothers, who had an additional supply because they were pumping at work, an early sign that women's expanding employment opportunities would have a strong impact on milk banking.

Additional findings support my hypothesis that women's opportunities were influential to milk banking in this period, and may have contributed to the decommodification process. First, unlike the Boston Directory and other early breast milk banks, which were established by physicians, the San Francisco bank was established by the

American Association of University Women, a group of philanthropic women, rather than by male physicians. The AAUW's involvement in breast milk banking points to the profound changes in women's roles from the previous era, as educated women became more involved in providing medical and charitable services to women and children.

Sharp variations in the supply of breast milk also point to the changing socio-economic characteristics of milk bank donors. Notably, in 1969, after five years of declining milk supply, the San Francisco milk bank suddenly experienced a resurgence in milk donation. This coincides with increased breastfeeding rates, particularly among middle-class women (Hirshman and Butler, 1981). As Blum (1999) demonstrated, breastfeeding became a central tenet of the ideology of intensive, exclusive motherhood that valorizes middle-class mother's parenting choices. The records also indicate that the breast milk bank increasingly recruited donors from childbirth classes and La Leche League meetings. Both the natural childbirth movement and the La Leche League are immersed in this conception of motherhood (see Blum, 1999; Smith, 2009:9). This was also the period when the 10 cents an ounce payment had the lowest monetary value, suggesting that donors were motivated by something other than money.

Both the supply of and demand for breast milk were also affected by improvements in artificial infant formula that made

...unlike the Boston Directory and other early breast milk banks, which were established by physicians, the San Francisco bank was established by the American Association of University Women, a group of philanthropic women, rather than by male physicians.

By 1970, the payment for breast milk was an anachronism, a symbolic tribute to middle-class donors' special commitment to their own and other infants' well-being.

it the infant food of choice for both mothers and doctors. Although breastfeeding rates were already falling precipitously by 1948, when the San Francisco milk bank opened its doors, the development of new formulas for infants with diverse nutritional needs, and the introduction of pre-mixed formulas in the early 1960s, further diminished breastfeeding's status as the best food for infants. Breastfeeding therefore became increasingly rare and precious as fewer and fewer women initiated breastfeeding. This rarity helped elevate the symbolic value of breastfeeding and breast milk within the ideology of intensive motherhood.

These findings suggest that changes in women's role and employment opportunities, new mothering ideologies, and advances in formula technologies, significantly influenced breast milk banking in this era and contributed to the process of decommodification. By 1970, the payment for breast milk was an anachronism, a symbolic tribute to middle-class donors' special commitment to their own and other infants' well-being.

For the third era, I am using a combination of methods to examine the Mothers' Milk Bank in San Jose, CA, including analysis of institutional records, interviews with donors, recipients, and milk bank managers and employees—in addition to an ethnography at the milk bank itself. My initial analysis of bank records and interviews with managers lead me to three

initial findings. First, women's employment continues to affect milk banking. The "typical" donor to the San Jose bank is employed, and employed donors pump breast milk because they are separated from their infants. Mothers who pump regularly often express more than their infants need, creating an excess supply they feel uncomfortable disposing of, due to the highly symbolic meaning of the milk. Therefore, mothers' high rate of employment is an important factor in the availability of donors, and the bank's ability to rely on this altruistic model.

Second, contemporary breast milk banks are sites where motherhood is actively and intensively constructed. For bank managers, donors, and recipients, breast milk symbolizes "good mothering," and all of these groups engage in the construction of this meaning. This symbolic meaning is so powerful that even gay men creating families through surrogacy use banked breast milk. The fact that the milk is donated, rather than sold, adds to the symbolic value. The ideology of intensive motherhood, in which breastfeeding represents a mother's unconditional love and generosity, is therefore a central component of the bank's work.

Finally, advances in breast pump technologies make it relatively easy and convenient to express milk, further contributing to the supply of donor milk. Today, breast pump companies specifically cre-

ate and market breast pumps for working women, and, although there is no data on how many women express milk at work, the phenomenon has received enough attention both in the media and in the recent healthcare legislation to suggest that pumping at work is widespread, creating an excess supply of frozen breast milk. In addition, the widespread availability of the internet has made it easier for women with excess milk to learn about and contact milk banks. These two factors may explain why donations to the San Jose milk bank have quadrupled since 2000.

My research on breast milk banking demonstrates that social and economic changes over the course of the twentieth century, including changes in women's employment opportunities, new mothering ideologies, and advances in technology, also altered the breast milk banking model. This research also illuminates the evolution of the social value of breast milk in American society. In the process, I describe a unique, almost paradoxical event in capitalist societies: the decommodification of a previously commodified product. I hope this research contributes to our understanding of these fascinating social processes.

Marisa Gerstein Pineau is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Sociology at UCLA. She received a CSW Travel Grant to support her research.

WORKS CITED

- American Academy of Pediatrics. (1943). "Recommended Standards for the Operation of Mothers' Milk Bureaus." *Journal of Pediatrics* 23(1):112-128.
- Apple, R.D. (1987). *Mothers and Medicine: A Social History of Infant Feeding, 1890-1950*. Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Almeling, Rene. (2007). "Selling Eggs, Selling Gender: Egg Agencies, Sperm Banks, and the Medical Market in genetic Materials." *American Sociological Review*, 72: 319-340.
- Blum, LM. (1999). *At the Breast: Ideologies of Breastfeeding and Motherhood in the Contemporary United States*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Chapin, HD. (1923). "The Operation of a Breast Milk Dairy." *Transactions of the American Pediatric Society*, 25:150-155.
- Fildes, VA. (1988). *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present*. Oxford; New York: Basil Blackwell.
- Golden, J. (1996). From commodity to gift: Gender, class, and the meaning of breast milk in the 20th-century. *Historian*, 59:75-87.
- Hays, S. (1996). *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Healy, K. (2006). *Last Best Gifts: Altruism and the Market for Human Blood and Organs*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Hirschman, C., Butler, M. (1981). "Trends and Differentials in Breast Feeding: An Update." *Demography* 18(1):39-54.
- Hoobler, B.R. (1927). "The Production, Collection, and Distribution of Human Milk: Retrospect and Prospect." *JAMA* 88(23):1786-1789.
- Lukacs, G. (1923). *History and Class Consciousness*.
- Marx, K. (1967). *Capital: A Critique of Capital Economy*.
- Smith, LJ. (2009). *The Impact of Birthing Practices on Breastfeeding*, 2nd ed. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers.
- Swanson, KW. (2009). "Human Milk as Technology and Technologies of Human Milk: Medical Imaginings in the Early 20th Century United States." *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 37:20-37.
- Talbot, F. (1913). "The Wetnurse Problem." *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 169:760-762.
- Titmuss, RM. (1971). *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Wolf, JH. (2001). *Don't Kill Your Baby: Public Health and the Decline of Breastfeeding in the 19th and 20th Centuries*. Columbus, OH: The Ohio State University Press.
- Wolf, JB. (2010). *Is Breast Best? Taking on the Breastfeeding Experts and the New High-Stakes Motherhood*. New York: NYU Press.
- Zelizer, V. (1985). *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.



COMEDY



Indulging and Divulging: Exploding Expectation in Stand-up Comedy by Women of Color

BY CHRISTIE NITTROUER

WOMEN IN STAND-UP COMEDY face the challenge of negotiating a place for their body as they are immediately marked as other, different, and foreign to the stand-up stage. Often female stand-up comedians adhere to self-debasing material and personas; easing into formulaic punch lines and pleasing the audience with recognizable tropes, structures, and gimmicks. Particularly for women of color, the stand-up circuit tends to demand stereotypical depictions of racial humor, fulfilling expectations but binding these performers according to the problematic terms of representation. This

article is part of a larger dissertation project that explores the ways that female stand-up comedians tamper with a notion of belonging through their bodies, foul language, and comedic structure and timing. The two comedians that I explore in this article tend to rely on audience expectation initially, and, to a certain extent, they fulfill this call. However, they succeed only momentarily and as means to establish a context that they immediately mock through their stand-up. Here I expose the way that Maysoon Zayid, a Palestinian-American comedian, and Suzanne Whang, a Korean-American comedian play with the possibility of inhabiting

multiple identities to suggest that gender is unstable and representation is unstable.

Maysoon Zayid

Maysoon Zayid, after realizing she would “never be seen on TV” as a “Palestinian, Muslim, virgin, with Cerebral Palsy from New Jersey,” adopted comedy as a way to renegotiate the terms of her visibility. For Zayid, the “American Dream” is realized through comedy as a less-literal way to “buy in” or assimilate with American culture by way of humorous critique. Comedy, in Zayid’s case, becomes a currency that affirms one’s

place through physical and vocal presence as well serving as a psychical linkage between Americans in a multi-racial and multi-cultural nation. To problematize the process of place-making in America, Zayid plays with what scholar Inderpal Grewal calls the “post-9/11 hyphen” in “Transnational America: Race, Gender, and Citizenship after 9/11,” as an unstable signifier that functions as both assimilation to and a contestation of American culture. Grewal defines it as such: “the hyphen ceases to be a sign of resistance to the American Nation but rather becomes the marker of a contingent ability of those with such an identity to switch from one side of the hyphen to the other but at other times to challenge the American nation with this contingency” (538). Zayid’s performance is located on both sides of the hyphen, especially in regard to her access to language, where she splits a thick Jersey accent with jokes and anecdotes in Arabic. Switching between languages and dialects (when imitating her mother) displays Zayid’s ability to both “challenge” and endorse American values. It can also be viewed as her allegiance to the local; both as a Jersey girl and a Palestinian.

Zayid humorously discusses her transitory allegiance to both the US and Palestine, though her interactions with Israeli military at the airport are delightfully satirized. On tour in Seattle with the Arab American Comedy troupe,

she performs in a familiar way with her audience understanding her troubled positionality. Though outside the US, the global aspect of Zayid’s performance kicks in as she performs herself as a New Yorker trying to “package” herself humorously for the Israeli soldiers who place her as Palestinian. Zayid again references an American game show in an ironic tone; where she does not state answers, instead she destabilizes with the question mark:

There is this misconception that Israelis don’t love Palestinian. That is not true. They love me so much that they keep me in the airport for like 8 hours when I land. And I’m a New Yorker, so I can’t be stuck anywhere that long and not multitask. So when I go into my interrogation with the Israel soldiers I like to multitask and what I do is practice for a very popular American game show – not *Fear Factor*, I know that’s what you’re thinking. I practice for *Jeopardy*. So what I do is answer all questions in the form of question, so when they ask me (*in Israel accent*), “What is your name?” I go “ding” (*hits imaginary buzzer*), “What is Maysoon?” “Where are you going?” I go “ding, what is my land not yours?” (*beat*) I pick up my teeth from a pool of blood and go to get searched.

In this performance, “what is my land?” and “what is Maysoon?” are not definitively located or defined. They are posed as possibilities, thus troubling the essential insider/outsider relationship and the boundaries that define those of and with abject status. Zayid performs a humor-

ous questioning of her own identity as an abject refugee, picking up her teeth in a pool of abject blood. As the routine continues, Zayid points to her position as an outsider in an American context as a way of establishing a connection with the Israelis. She takes a brief aside to include her mother’s rejection of her as an abject girl with a disability:

And when they search me, as I said I grew up around Catholics so I never ever had Christmas, like all my friends would be like “What’d Santa Claus bring you?” and I’d say (*crying*) Nothing, I asked my mom “why doesn’t Santa come to our house” and she’s like (*in a Palestinian accent*) “because he doesn’t like little shaking girls...he wants a son.” So it makes me deal with soldiers, so I bring Christmas to Tel Aviv. What I do is wrap every article of clothing in my suitcase in festive Christmas paper. So, every sock every panty, every tampon; wrapped, festive! And they gather everything up and put it back in the suitcase and take it away...and I go “you’re getting nothing for Christmas because Santa Claus is mad at you.” (*in a demanding tone*) Now give us back Jesus’ birth place!

Zayid’s mother is marked with a thick, sharp accent. In Zayid’s portrayal her mother is without emotion with the declaration that she “wants a son.” Zayid brings a stereotype of ideological value by sarcastically ignoring her mother’s misogyny and projecting it onto the Israel soldiers. Zayid uses her mother’s limitations to “deal with soldiers” thus a valuable tool in her resistance.

Effectively, Zayid, as she is deemed “repulsively other” by dominant systems of representation, destabilizes the structures that bind representation of Arab-Americans.

Zayid establishes several subject positions by conflating “borders” of homeland. This construction of identity, as it is produced by consumer citizenship and the ideology of the “American Dream,” is thus never complete. Hence, the iterative nature of a comedy routine provides the platform for Zayid to make visible the supposedly “stable borders and subjects” that attempt to compartmentalize belonging. Zayid uses excess Christian wrapping paper as a convention from Christians, to draw attention to an abject product, tampons, which is ironically something that men lack. Zayid humorously outs herself as abject on many levels, as a shaking (physically disabled) girl (no phallus) that does not celebrate Christmas in the US (does not participate in “buying into” commercial/holiday citizenship).

Suzanne Whang

Suzanne Whang is a politically driven performance artist, or as she labels herself playfully on her website performance artist refers to: “actor, television host, stand-up comedian, author, public speaker, dessert topping, and floor wax.” As a stand-up she took playful activism to the stage after she found casting directors order-

ing readings that commanded her to be more “oriental.” Whang plays into this desire for an orientalized performance by creating a hyperbole, an alter-ego that is a “F.O.B.” (Fresh of the Boat) Korean woman named Sung Hee Park. As her alter ego Sung Hee, Whang shocks her audience with provocative racist jokes and shticky humor, using the N-Word, the G-Word, or calling out certain audience members as “homos.”

Perhaps most exciting about Whang’s performance is that while she maintains an exaggerated character she has enjoyed a long run as the host of Home and Garden Television’s (HGTV) highest rated show *House Hunters*. The show follows potential home buyers and their selection among three different homes. Whang’s role on the show is to summarize their experience as an accent-less “American.” Capturing a distinctly American experience (home buying) and perforating the domestic sphere where viewers watch the show, Whang appeals to the bind that requires people of color to assimilate to American culture on the one hand. On the other hand she indulges racist stereotypes that are recycled in fictional television and film programming on stage. The conflation between Suzanne and Song Hee is a delightful one; where audiences are set up to invest in the myth of Song Hee and thirty minutes into the set Suzanne appears with an intelligent, crass, and critical voice that is so neutralized (in terms



of regional accent) that it is no surprise she has become an emblem of a “household” network.

Whang’s career in stand-up has been paired with the task of responding to criticism of her act and articulating a keen understanding of the theoretical impetus behind the character Song Hee Park. Whang succinctly describes the act on her website reminding her viewers that the performance is an “act”: “the act is a satire of racism in America, reminiscent of Archie Bunker’s character in *All In The Family*. The comparison suggests the terms for when we tolerate racism; when it is performed by a lovable patriarch. Whang can attest to the ironic statement she bravely makes on stage, as it grew from years of demands from casting directors to be more



Suzanne Whang as Sung Hee Park

“oriental.” Recalling the interactions Whang jokes, “I thought I couldn’t even do the accent because I would go to auditions and people would say, “Could you do that more Oriental?” What does that mean? I’m 100% Korean. What do you mean do that more Oriental?” (Interview 2003). Whang’s truth, “I’m 100% Korean,” is the irony and she identifies as 100% whatever “oriental” might mean, though the demand she responds to is one that nurtures a prevalent stereotype in the U.S. Song Hee Park was born out of an experimental acting class where Suzanne playfully (and “safely”) created a character that is an “endearing” immigrant who uses naiveté to garner audience acceptance and support. When describing the construction of this character Whang notes the possibilities:

What if she doesn’t even write her own material? What if she doesn’t even understand what the jokes mean? She just sort of wrote them out phonetically but she really wants to do good and she’s so nervous that she’s like shaking and crying behind the fan. I started to like the idea of this. And she would tell these horrific, racist, politically incorrect, inappropriate, sexual, anything goes jokes to the point where she’s a fish out of water and she’s an underdog and there’s something endearing about the character that people really root for her, even though she’s saying these horrible things. So people end up being uncomfortable but then laughing and then really wanting her to do well. (Interview 2003)

Clearly understanding the intentions behind the character Song Hee, Whang ingeniously locates the agency in a character that seemingly has no agency as a meek, shy, “fresh of the boat” immigrant from Korea. Recycling jokes that are not her own, Song Hee further distances the impact of offensive content. In one example Sung Hee performs a recycled joke though she emphasizes her otherness by laying a thick Korean accent on: “how do you know a Korean broke into yo’ house? (*nodding and smiling*) Dog isss missing and home wohkk is done.”

Called onto the stage, Sung Hee Park is given a coveted welcome by the host—“it’s her first time performing on stage”—garnering audience sympathy and leveling the distinction between audience and performer. Clad in a traditional Hanbok dress in a bright rose pink, Sung Hee hunches her body over and shuffles her feet, making her appear older and smaller in size. Toting props that play to Asian stereotypes, a kitchy pink purse that has a spout on the end (so as to resemble a watering can) and a Buchae fan that has a Korean flag on it. Heightening an emotion such as nervousness allows Sung Hee to take extra time in setting up the audience’s expectations for the performance, drawing out tension for a great release when the jokes begin. Sung Hee hides behind the fan from the moment she enters the stage, in this way the fan serves as a setup for the punchline (which would be the

expression on her face); meanwhile her efforts to set up for the performance are hindered by the use of only one hand (as the other hand holds the fans) to adjust the microphone, move a stool closer, and unfold her notes. Adjusting the microphone, which is intentionally placed far above her head (Whang is actually quite average height in the comedy world), Sung Hee breathes nervously through the fan and into the microphone. Finally ready to reveal her face, she slowly lowers the fan to a nervous but genuinely beaming set of bright white teeth. The reveal is an outrageous leveler of the tension evoked. Still nervous, she immediately puts the fan back to cover her face. Gathering her confidence for a moment, she extends two fingers into the shape of a peace sign. Her offering performed so desperately that it again garners the audience's pity. Cautiously she unfolds a piece of paper with notes on it. Playing to the standard crowd work (where a comedian interacts with audience to establish a live, shared context), Sung Hee asks: "Are there any gooks in the house?" Upon hearing the slur uttered so naively the audience erupts in laughter, confused by what appears to be a self-identified racist. Continuing with this trope, she enthusiastically recalls another joke for her audience: "last night my boyfriend ate me out and half latuhhr (later) he hungry again (*big smile, covering face with fan*).

Exploiting the audiences' own feelings of vulnerability toward such a nervous character, Whang locates the possibility for a shared community through stand-up, one that is critical of the racist characterizations recycled in mass media. As Whang describes it, Sung Hee is the endearing "underdog," a subject position that Americans tend to root for and support vehemently. Enhancing the emotion behind her character, playing Sung Hee as a "bad stand-up comedian," and using stuttering, slippages, and misinterpretations, Whang exposes the problematics behind stand-up as one might see it in Vegas or more "traditional" stand-up clubs. By inviting audience members to interact with the character she is required to play in auditions, Whang establishes a context that she may counter as Suzanne Whang—a poised, articulate, and enthusiastically raunchy "self." Though stand-up comedy certainly has an international presence, it is a distinctly American art form, as it encourages and welcomes diverse subject positions. Despite the idealism behind stand-up as a platform for critical thinking, it can also call attention to audience expectation and upon doing so, reject stagnant stereotype. Both Zayid and Whang play to audience expectations as presumed "others" and through their comedy they suggest the way race and citizenship can be performed, whether dabbling on both sides of the hyphen in Zayid's case or "exploding" the hyphen in Whang's.

Christie Nittrouer is a PhD candidate in Performance Studies at UCLA and a recipient of the Irving and Jean Stone Dissertation Year Fellowship as well as a CSW travel grant. Her dissertation looks at the ways that diverse female comedians tamper with a notion of belonging through their bodies, foul language, and comedic structure and timing. She is also a stand-up comedian.

WORKS CITED

- Grewal, Inderpal. "Transnational America: Race, Gender, and Citizenship after 9/11." *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation, and Culture*. 9.4(2003): 535-61.
- Provenza, Paul, and Dan Dion. *Satiristas: Comedians, Contrarians, Raconteurs & Vulgarians*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2010. Print.
- Sakai, Karen. "What's 'Whang' with Suzanne's F.O.B. Comedy?" *Asia Pacific Arts*. UCLA Asia Institute. 20 Feb 2004. Web. 1 Feb 2011. <<http://www.asiaarts.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=7759>>
- Whang, Suzanne. "Interview: Suzanne Whang on Herself, Images of Asian Americans, and Her Character Sung Hee Park." Interview by Angela Kang. *Asia Pacific Arts*. UCLA Asia Institute. 4 Dec 2003. Web. <<http://www.asiaarts.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=7690>>
- Whang, Suzanne. "Show Girls Debut." Suzanne Whang. N.p., n.d. Web. 9 Feb 2011. <<http://www.suzanne-whang.com/html/vidclips.asp?video=showgirls>>.
- Zayid, Maysoon. Maysoon Zayid Website. n.p. n.d. Web. 12 Dec. 2008. <<http://maysoon.com/>>
- Arab-American Comedy Tour*. Dir. Ahmed Ahmed, Dean Obeidallah and Maysoon Zayid. Arab Film Distribution, 2006. Film.



The benefits of supporting others

BY TRISTEN K. INAGAKI

We spend a lot of time caring for and providing support to others. According to the American Time Use Survey, individuals spend hours each day providing support and care for others and typically women spend more time engaged in these activities than men (United States Department of Labor, 2010). Given the substantial amount of time we spend caring for others, one might ask “why”?

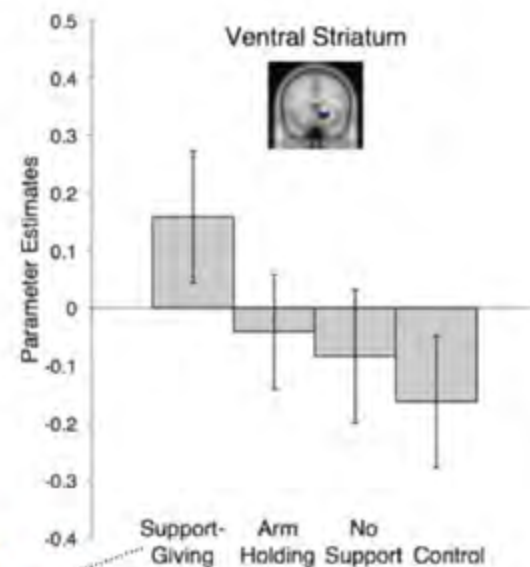
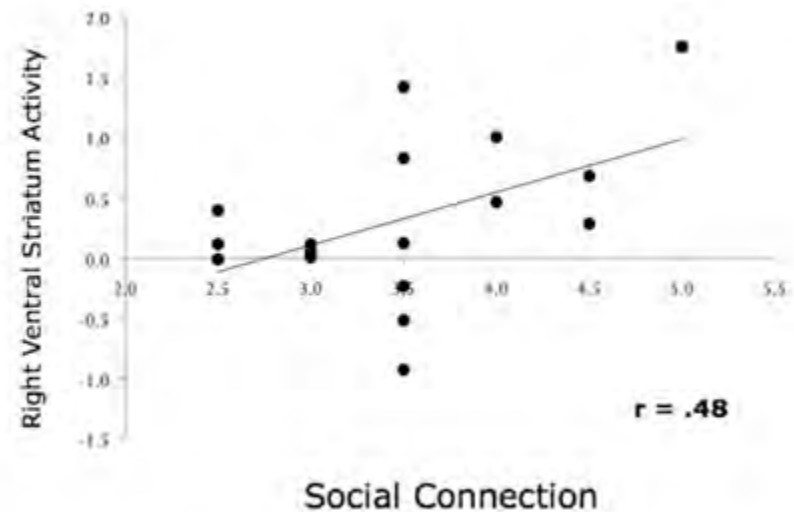
IT TURNS OUT THAT WE CAN AND DO

derive benefits from giving to others. In a new study I completed in collaboration with my advisor, Dr. Naomi Eisenberger, we found that giving support to others activated brain regions associated with reward-related processing. Specifically, giving support to others activated the ventral striatum—a neural region known to be involved in responding to basic rewards like chocolate and money.

In this study we used functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) to scan women as they completed four different conditions. In the first condition, each woman provided her boyfriend with support by holding his arm as he experienced painful stimuli (support-giving condition). In a second condition, each woman did not provide support to her boyfriend, but instead held a squeezeball as he went through a painful task (no support-giving condition). In the last two conditions, each woman either simply held her boyfriend's arm (arm holding condition) or held a squeezeball (control condition), this time, without any painful stimulation to him.

Not only did women recruit a reward-related neural region when they gave support, but this activity also correlated with how connected they felt to their boyfriend.

Women showed greater activity in the ventral striatum, a reward-related neural region, during support-giving compared to when they did not give support.



The more reward-related neural activity women showed while providing support, the more connected they reported feeling toward their partner.

In other words, the more reward-related neural activity these women demonstrated while providing support, the more connected they reported feeling toward their partner. This study is the first to show that providing support to loved ones in women relies on neural regions involved in reward processes and suggests that the person providing support to others may also accrue benefits simply by giving.

Research in the field of health psychology has demonstrated the importance of supportive social ties, like the ones studied above, for our overall health and well-being. In particular, relationships with spouses, friends, and family members who act as supportive contacts enhances well-being, while a lack of social support is correlated with increased mortality (Berkman & Syme, 1979). This effect of social ties on health is as strong a predictor of negative health outcomes as more traditional risk factors of long-term health, such as smoking and obesity (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010).

Typically it has been assumed that social ties contribute to health through the receipt of social support. However, our study and the work of others begins to suggest that the act of giving support to others may be just as, if not more, important than

receiving support for health. Moreover, some work has started to suggest that, for women in particular, giving support may be a stronger determinant of health than receiving support. In a recent study, giving support was a stronger predictor of longevity than receiving support; those who gave more support were less likely to die during a 5-year follow-up period (Brown, Nesse, Vinokur, Smith, 2003). In another study, giving more support than receiving was associated with fewer sick days for women, whereas for men, receiving more support than giving was associated with fewer sick days (Vaananen, Buunk, Kivimaki, Pentti, & Vahtera, 2005).

Similarly, men who received social support from their significant others during a stressful task released less cortisol, a commonly studied hormone associated with stress, compared to men who did not receive any support (Kirschbaum, Klauer, Filipp, & Hellhammer, 1995). Women, on the other hand, did not show this effect. In fact, receiving support from their boyfriend's slightly increased the release of cortisol in these women. This does not mean that women do not benefit from receiving support from others, but does suggest that looking at the effects on the provider of the support should be studied further.

Animal research on the maternal care-giving system, which supports these support-giving behaviors in humans, may help us shed light on why women show a health benefit from giving support to others. Activation of the maternal caregiving system, including the ventral striatum, supports proper care of offspring such as nest building and grooming. Additionally, built into the caregiving system is a stress-reducing component that allows for care to continue even under stress (Stack, Balakrishnan, Numan, & Numan, 2002). To the extent that women also recruit a caregiving system, providing support may have similar stress-reducing effects.

It is important to acknowledge the limits of what this kind of data can tell us about providing support. Resources and an individual's motivation to give support to others are important determinants as to whether or not supporting another is beneficial. If you are too stressed or overwhelmed with other things going on in your life at a given moment in time, providing support to someone else might actually be a burden. However, aside from the large and established literature on caregiver burnout, or the detrimental effects of caring for very ill relatives or patients (Schulz & Beach, 1999), few researchers have looked

at the effects of more everyday supportive behavior toward others.

Currently, I am extending these results into another study to further explore how giving support might reduce the stress response and lead to more long-term health benefits in women. Hopefully the results from this line of work draw attention to the inherently rewarding effects of support giving and help us better understand one of the pathways by which support may enhance health.

Tristen Inagaki is a doctoral student in the Social Affective Neuroscience Laboratory in the Department of Psychology. Her research interests include the mechanisms underlying positive social interactions and the health benefits of being socially connected with others. She is a Jacob K. Javits Fellow and a National Science Foundation Fellow and was awarded a CSW travel grant to present findings from her study on social support at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Conference in San Antonio, TX.

NOTE: Photo on page 29 from istockphoto.com

REFERENCES

- Berkman, L.F., Syme, S.L., 1979. Social networks, host resistance, and mortality: A nine-year follow-up study of Alameda county residents. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 109, 186-203.
- Brown, S.L., Nesse, R.M., Vinokur, A.D., & Smith, D.M. (2003). Providing social support may be more beneficial than receiving it: Results from a prospective study of mortality. *Psychological Science*, 14, 320-327.
- Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. (2010). Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review. *PLOS Medicine*, 7, 1-20.
- Kirschbaum, C., Klauer, T., Filipp, S.H., Hellhammer, D.H., (1995). Sex-specific effects of social support on cortisol and subjective responses to acute psychological stress. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 57, 23-31.
- Schulz, R., & Beach, S. R. (1999). Caregiving as a risk factor for mortality: the caregiver health effects study. *JAMA*, 282, 2215-2219.
- Sober, E., and Wilson, D.S. (1998). *Unto others: the evolution of unselfish behavior*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).
- Stack, E. C., Balakrishnan, R., Numan, M. J., & Numan, M. (2002). A functional neuroanatomical investigation of the role of the medial preoptic area in neural circuits regulating maternal behavior. *Behavioural Brain Research*, 131, 17-36.
- Taylor, S.E., Klein, L.C., Lewis, B.P., Gruenewald, T.L., Gurung, R.A., & Updegraff, J.A. (2000). Biobehavioral responses to stress in females: tend-and-befriend, not fight-or-flight. *Psychological Review*, 107, 411-429.
- United States Department of Labor. *Average hours per day spent in primary activities (1) for the civilian population, 2009 quarterly and annual averages* [data file]. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t12.htm>
- United States Department of Labor. *Time spent in primary activities (1) and percent of the civilian population engaging in each activity, averages per day by sex, 2009 annual*

averages [data file]. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/atus.t01.htm>

Vaananen, A., Buunk, B.P., Kivimäki, M., Pentti, J., & Vahtera, J. (2005). When it is better to give than to receive: Long-term health effects of perceived reciprocity in support exchange. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 89, 176-193.

Keep it Green!



Keep it Green!

SUSTAINABILITY TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

Eat Less Meat!



ucla center for the study of women



DIRECTOR	<i>Kathleen McHugh</i> PROFESSOR, ENGLISH AND CINEMA AND MEDIA STUDIES
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR	<i>Julie K. Childers, Ph.D.</i>
MANAGING EDITOR	<i>Brenda Johnson-Grau</i>
ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST	<i>Erma Acebo</i>
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT	<i>Emily Walker</i>
STUDENT ASSISTANTS	<i>Palash Agrawal, Hao Dieu, Andrey Gordienko, Maryssa Hall, Jackie Hunt, Angelica Lai, Susan McKibben, Lindsey McLean, Cathy Son, and Dayo Spencer-Walters</i>

CSW Update is the newsletter of the UCLA Center for the Study of Women. It is published monthly during the academic year. UCLA faculty, staff, and students are welcome to submit articles for inclusion. If you have questions, please email the publications staff at cswpubs@women.ucla.edu

EDITOR/DESIGNER: *Brenda Johnson-Grau*

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS: *Palash Agrawal, Hao Dieu, Maryssa Hall, and Lindsey McLean*



UCLA CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN
1500 PUBLIC AFFAIRS BUILDING/BOX 957222
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-7222

CAMPUS MAILCODE: 722203

310 825 0590 / 310 825 0456 (FAX)