

*Pacella Research Center Annual Report*  
*New Directions in Clinical Research Training*

June 13, 2025

Dear Drs. Twersky and Press

(cc Drs. Amber Nemeth and Howard Bliwise)

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**A. Introduction**

Last year the Pacella Research group was overwhelmed by the death on March 15, 2024 of Bernard Maskit, our eminent colleague, dear friend, and lifelong spouse and partner of Wilma.

This past year we have gradually re-grouped.

Miriam Steele has accepted the position of Chair of the IRB, which Maskit had chaired. We will plan how that will be organized.

Michael Peral is our Research Coordinator & Tech Lead. He had worked very closely with Bernard Maskit and learned how to work with the various language measures, which he has taught to new research fellows and other colleagues. He is well versed in the development of the newly created “time-DAAP, which Maskit was almost finished in developing it at his untimely death.

**B. Referential Process**

A major focus of the work at Center relates to the the study of the Referential Process and its theoretical ad clinical applications. A description can be found on our web page at <https://referentialprocess.org/>. The work on the Referential Process is a multi-site project with centers at the Pacella Research Center of the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute; Bergamo University, Bergamo and Milan; and La Sapienza, Rome. Participants currently include faculty, researchers, clinicians and students associated with these institutions, and with the City College of New York; the Derner Institute at Adelphi University; the Hebrew University of Jerusalem; St. John’s University; Stony Brook University; the University of Toronto; and Yale University.

The work on Multiple Code Theory and the Referential Process continues to focus on the integration of psychoanalytic theory with psychotherapy research and the development of new methods for this research, centering on the computer program DAAP (Discourse Attributes Analysis Program) . We have the converging goals of making research more accessible and useful for clinicians in their work with patients, and also making psychoanalytic theory more accessible to researchers as a basis for empirical investigations.

In addition to the participation of Wilma Bucci and Leon Hoffman, as co-directors of the center, the following people have been very active in our work, which will be evident from the articles in the Special Issue in Memory of Bernard Maskit in the *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* (listed below). These include:

Christopher Christian is Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Psychoanalytic Psychology*; Assistant Clinical Professor, Yale School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry; and a Training Analyst and past Dean of the Institute for Psychoanalytic Training and Research (IPTAR).

Charles M. Jaffe is a supervising and training psychoanalyst at the Chicago Psychoanalytic institute and retired Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Rush University Medical Center.

Rachele Mariani is a psychologist, psychotherapist and member of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society and the International Psychoanalytical Association. She is a Visiting Scholar at the Pacella Research Center of NYPSI.

Sean Murphy who was a stalwart at the Pacella Research Center and taught research for over a decade, continues to consult with us on many issues. He is Vice President of Data for Vibrant Emotional Health. Vibrant is the administrator of 988, <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988>.

Attà Negri is associate professor in Dynamic Psychology at University of Bergamo, Italy, where he teaches Clinical Assessment, Psychological Interview and Dynamic Psychology of Interpersonal Relations. He is a Visiting Scholar at the Pacella Research Center of NYPSI.

He has been instrumental in the development of DaapLAB, a standalone application developed for Windows and MacOS, which can be obtained on our website (<https://referentialprocess.org/measures/>) DaapLAB implements the fundamental functions of DAAP and enriches it with a filtering algorithm (DaapMAP), allowing the user to automatically highlight the relevant portions of the text. Moreover, DaapLAB© interfaces with Whisper, an open-source AI trained for Speech-to-Text tasks.

Andrés Roussos is Director of the Lab of Psychology and Technology of Information and Communication (LIPSTIC) and principal researcher at CONICET (National Board of Scientific

Research), Universidad de Buenos Aires (Argentina). He was President of the Society for Psychotherapy Research 2024-25.

### **C. Staff**

Henry Peterson is finishing his fourth year doctoral student in Clinical Psychology at The City College of New York, He was instrumental in organizing the new web page (<https://referentialprocess.org/>) and editing the Special Issue in Memory of Bernard Maskit

Elena Petrovska was involved with editing the Special Issue.

Laura March has been involved with a collaborative research project below. She has learned the intricacies of scoring the linguistic measures of the DAAP.

Hunter Crespo, who works very closely with Miriam Steel has been instrumental in the development of the research project described below under Collaboration with Center for Regulation Focused Psychotherapy, Inc.

### **D. PUBLICATIONS FOCUSING ON REFERENTIAL PROCESS**

#### **A. SPECIAL ISSUE OF THE *JOURNAL OF PSYCHOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH*. “THE REFERENTIAL PROCESS: EMPIRICAL-THEORETICAL—CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES: IN MEMORY OF BERNARD MASKIT.**

This is the second Special Issue on the Referential Process in the *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*. The first was in Volume 50 (2021),

The Table of Contents of the current Special Issue.

#### **I. Introduction**

1. Introduction to the Issue

*Wilma Bucci, Henry Peterson*

#### **II. Reflections on the Legacy of Bernard Maskit**

2. The Scientific Legacy of Bernard Maskit’s Work for Psychotherapy Practice and Research

*Attà Negri*

3. Reflections on Bernie Maskit and the Referential Process Research Group

*Sean Murphy*

4. Words, Sounds, and Images: Reflections about Bernard Maskit

*Leon Hoffman*

#### **III. Presentation of Core Concepts**

5. A Journey Through the Land of DAAP: Including Visits to Weighted Dictionaries, Smoothing, Covariations, and the Effects of Word Order, with Connections to Psychology, Psycholinguistics, Mathematics and Statistics, and Ending at Time-Based DAAP (TDAAP)

*Bernard Maskit*

6. Maskit's Mathematical Contributions: The Smoothing Operator and DAAP Measures  
*Perry Suskind*
- IV. Advances in Theory**
7. Epistemological Foundations for the Use of the Linguistic Measures of the Referential Process  
*Attà Negri*
8. Emotion Schema and Unconscious Fantasy  
*Leon Hoffman*
- V. Applications 1: Process and Outcome**
9. An Overview of Referential Process Linguistic Measures in the Italian Language: Common Elements and Innovative Results  
*Rachele Mariani, Michela Di Trani, Luigi Solano, Alessia Renzi*
10. Exploring the Discourse Attributes of Referential Process in Emotion Focused and Cognitive Behavioral Therapies for Depression  
*Jinny Hong, Jeanne C. Watson*
11. Characterizing the Language of Therapist Interventions in Moments of High Patient Arousal  
*Karen Tocatly*
12. The Babel Effect on Linguistic Styles: A Comparison Between English and Italian Measures and New Instruments to Apply Across Languages  
*Attà Negri, Riccardo Bianchi, Stefano Milesi*
13. The Weight of Words: An Analysis of Autobiographical Narratives and Psychopathological Measures in Anorexia Nervosa  
*Rachele Mariani, Maria Giovanna Massari, Alessia Renzi, Isabella Marini, Michela Di Trani, Massimo Pasquini*
- VI. Applications 2: Micro-Process**
14. A Clinician-Researcher Collaboration: The Road to Ms. M  
*Charles Jaffe*
15. Specificities of Mental Functioning and Referential Process in Body Dysmorphic Disorder: A single case study using the Psychodynamic Diagnostic Manual (PDM-3)  
*Christopher Christian, Alice Fiorini Bincoletto, Rachele Mariani, Attà Negri, Vitorrio Lingiardi, Annalisa Tanzilli*
16. Changes in Speech Rhythm and Language-Style Between In-Person and Remote Treatment  
*Henry Peterson*
- VII. Conclusion**
17. Concluding Remarks  
*Wilma Bucci*
- B. OTHER PUBLICATIONS 2024-2025 (MEMBERS OF REFERENTIAL PROCESS GROUP HIGHLIGHTED)**

1. Bincoletto, A., Negri, A. A. M., Christian, C., & Mariani, R. (2024). The road to symbolization: PDM-2 and linguistic measures in dialogue for the study of body dysmorphic disorder treatment. *Psicoterapia e ricerca in un mondo che cambia Congresso Nazionale SPR-IAG 7ÈÈ*.
2. Fiorini Bincoletto, A., Tanzilli, A., Negri, A., Lingiardi, V., Christian, C., & Mariani, R. (2024). The road to symbolization. PDM-2 and linguistic measures in dialogue for the study of body dysmorphic disorder treatment. *Book of abstracts*.
3. Jaffe, C., Bucci, W., Maskit, B., Murphy, S. (2024). Clinical and Research Perspectives on the Therapeutic Conversation: The Case of Ms. M. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*. 72(6). pp. 911-952.
4. Jaffe, C. (2025). Presentation: The Relationship Between Psychoanalysis, Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Research and Neuroscience. Neuropsychoanalysis Discussion Group. American Psychoanalytic Association. San Francisco. February 6.
5. Jaffe, C. (2025). Emotion Schemas: Linking the Clinical Conversation, Development, and Neurobiology. Webinar for the Neuropsychoanalytic Association. April 26.
6. Negri, A., Mariani, R., Tanzilli, A., Fiorini Bincoletto, A., Lingiardi, V., & Christian, C. (2024). A Single Case Multimethod Assessment to Detect Significant Changes in the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Psychosomatic Disorders. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 106(5), 696-707.
7. Negri, A., & Barazzetti, A. (2025). [Epistemological Foundation for the Use of the Linguistic Measures of the Referential Process](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-025-10149-1). *Journal of psycholinguistic research*, 54(3), 33. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-025-10149-1>
8. Negri A. (2025). [The Scientific Legacy of Bernard Maskit's Work for Psychotherapy Practice and Research](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-025-10152-6). *Journal of psycholinguistic research*, 54(3), 30. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-025-10152-6>

#### **E. COLLABORATION WITH THE CENTER FOR REGULATION FOCUSED PSYCHOTHERAPY, INC (<https://www.centerforrpf.org/>)**

The Center is a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation committed to supporting the work of clinicians, researchers, and healthcare systems in the implementation and evaluation of Regulation Focused Psychotherapy for Children (RFP-C). Regulation-Focused Psychotherapy for Children (RFP-C) is a short-term, psychodynamic psychotherapy (STPP) for children who are chronically irritable, oppositional, and disruptive. It's mission is to:

1. Educate mental health professionals, teachers and other school staff, and parents in RFP-C to better understand children's disruptive behaviors and irritable mood; and
2. Facilitate research to evaluate the efficacy of RFP-C and adaptations of this treatment for other age groups and presentations.
  - A. This past year, the Pacella Research Center provided funds to the Center for RFP to support efforts to develop a Train the Trainers Program that will aid with dissemination and implementation of RFP-C.
  - B. This collaborative project was proposed and implemented by Hunter Crespo (a doctoral candidate at The New School and the manager of Miriam Steele's lab). The idea that emerged from our discussions was that the **initial parent interviews** would be scored for

**Reflective Functioning (RF)** and compared to **Defense mechanism (DM)** and to Linguistic measure from **Referential Process (RP)**. And, to compare various measures to one another and to the outcome (ODDRS) of the child in a naturalistic RFP-C treatment via the NYPSI in-school treatment program. This is a collaborative project involving The Center of Regulation Focused Psychotherapy, the Pacella Research Center, The New School in NYC, and the Università Rome Tor Vergata.

A subordinate study is a pilot feasibility study to assess whether an adaptation of the PIRS (The Psychodynamic Intervention Rating Scale) can be utilized to evaluate the nature of a therapist's intervention in RFP-C sessions, particularly defenses against painful affects.

## **F. CONCLUSION, IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE, CHALLENGES**

A major goal of the Research Center has been increasing our collaboration with clinical doctoral programs and including students in our projects. In 2023, we held a symposium which included presentations by two students who have completed their dissertations applying computerized measures in psychoanalytic and psychotherapy research. Jinny Hong presented her dissertation at the University of Toronto using computerized measures to compare the language of emotion focused and cognitive behavioral treatments. Karen Tocatly presented her dissertation at the City College of New York (CUNY), which characterized the nature of more or less effective therapist language in psychoanalytic treatments; this was given the award for best dissertation by the graduate faculty in psychology at CUNY.

Henry Peterson presented his symposium paper at the annual conference of the North American Society for Psychotherapy Research (NASPR) and received honors for the paper at CUNY. Another CUNY student, Oded Hadar has also completed his Masters' level project with our group.

The work of Leon Hoffman and colleagues on Regulation Focused Psychotherapy for Children (RFP-C), supported in part by the Pacella Research fund, continues to be very successful. Tracy Prout, the Principal Investigator of the Randomized Control Trial of Regulation Focused Psychotherapy for Children with Externalizing Behaviors, was awarded for the prize for best Scientific Paper of the year at the American Psychoanalytic Association February 2024 meeting. This paper was published in [Psychotherapy Research](#), the prestigious journal of the Society for Psychotherapy Research. We are very pleased that our work has been recognized by The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. RFP-C was discussed at a fully subscribed workshop and was included in a symposium on the treatment of irritable children at the October 2023 meeting in New York. In addition, a Randomized Control Trial of RFP-C has begun in Turkey. Sibel Halfon is the Principal Investigator. Can Buyukasik, a candidate at NYPSI and a member of the Center for Regulation Focused Psychotherapy team (and fluent in Turkish), is participating as a supervisor. Outreach to a variety of institutions and individuals on the implementation of RFP-C is actively underway. This includes the participation of graduate students rotating through NYPSI who are utilizing RFP-C in Public Schools. Leon Hoffman has

also taught and supervised the implementation of RFP-C conducted by psychology externs and interns in public schools as part of their rotation at NYPSI. One paper has thus far been published regarding this work.

In addition, Tehela Nimroody and colleagues have developed a manual to assess defense mechanisms utilized by young children. The development of the manual was published and the manual is available at [https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/suppl/10.1080/15289168.2018.1565005/suppl\\_file/hicp\\_a\\_1565005\\_sm2717.pdf](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/suppl/10.1080/15289168.2018.1565005/suppl_file/hicp_a_1565005_sm2717.pdf).

## CHALLENGES

1. Leon Hoffman, Sean Murphy, Wilma Bucci, and various guests taught the research courses to candidates. Shuli Sandler has now taken that over. She had been involved with Pacella. We hope to reintegrate her in our work.
2. As noted above we are actively involved with colleagues from many institutions, including from foreign ones. The only member actively involved in our teaching and research with RFP-C is Jon C. Buyukasik. Jon has co-taught the RFP-C seminar to interns and externs. He and LH have been actively involved in the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry promoting a greater attention to psychotherapy among child and adolescent psychiatrists.

**A major question is how to increase the relevance of research at NYPSI.**

3. Colleagues from Italy are Visiting Scholars at Pacella. A Pacella database has been developed and will be transferred under the supervision of Attà Negri at Bergamo University.
4. We have begun to think actively about succession as events have made us become very conscious of reality.

Sincerely,



Wilma Bucci, Ph.D.

[wbucci@icloud.com](mailto:wbucci@icloud.com)



Leon Hoffman, M.D.

[hoffman.leon@gmail.com](mailto:hoffman.leon@gmail.com)

Co-Directors, Pacella Research Center at NYPSI

Pacella Research Center at NYPSI | 247 East 82nd Street | New York, NY 10028