

## From history to current events: New faculty members Smiley and Yack ask difficult questions

BY MARJORIE LYON

Luminaries in their fields and married, Marion Smiley and Bernard Yack joined the Brandeis faculty this fall, each immersing students in similar debates coming from different vantage points.

Smiley, Ph.D., Princeton University, the J.P. Morgan Chase Chair in Ethics, conducts interdisciplinary research that focuses on ethics and politics. Trained in philosophy (her field is called analytic political philosophy), she explores the meaning of words—how to make logical inferences—and expands out of that to understand arguments and make sense of social relationships and moral responsibility. Her teaching style is to encourage debate, and she says that Brandeis students—verbally adept and far from shy—jump in and relish arguing, much to her delight.

Yack, Ph.D., Harvard University, the Lerman-Neubauer Chair in Democracy and Public Policy, trained in philosophy, history and political science (his field is called political theory), focuses on a more historical version—by scrutinizing history, he tries to understand what made us what we are. “Marion started with problems, concepts, moral responsibility, welfare independency and then worked out to make sense of the world,” explains Yack. “I started with the world and then worked back to the ideas.”



Marion Smiley and Bernard Yack

They met some 20 years ago at a little pizza joint near Princeton University. According to Yack, over a calzone they immediately got into a whopping three-hour intellectual argument. He can't remember who threw the first punch. Still debating, they admit that although equally stubborn, they have influenced each other.

An author of a book on moral responsibility, Smiley studies how public policy is influenced by conceptions of paternalism, dependence and autonomy often to the detriment of the disadvantaged. “What does it mean to make moral, social, political philosophy more international? What does it mean to take different cultures into consideration? Can we have cross-cultural dialogue?” she asks with

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obvious passion. “One of the reasons I came to Brandeis was the International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life, because in this day and age we cannot make moral arguments or ethical claims in isolation, we have to function on an international level. You can't speak about other cultures without knowing something about them. And you really have to have a dialogue with people from those cultures,” explains Smiley, who is also associated with women's studies at Brandeis.

Her forthcoming book, *Falling through Trap Doors: The Philosophy and Politics of Group Identification*, will be published by Cornell University Press. Smiley is involved with key issues such as South African apartheid, the treatment of welfare mothers and controversies concerning the environment. “A lot of my work is reconceptualization, trying to understand what we mean by terms like equality, justice and responsibility, and then rewriting them,” she explains, adding that she focuses on definitions and clarifying

meanings. Her emphasis is on the power of language and the meanings that we associate with words.

“I'm a conceptual analyst in terms of the context in which we come to formulate values in particular ways, their coherence and also the consequences involved. I try to rethink these values so that they're more workable and less prejudiced after reconstruction.” How do you reconstruct a value? she is asked. “My husband says with great arrogance.”

Growing up in rural areas of New Hampshire and Scotland, Smiley remembers her childhood in an environment like *Wuthering Heights*—“exciting, invigorating, romantically bleak.” Coming to Brandeis from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, Smiley has also taught at the State University of New York at Albany, Wesleyan University, Princeton University and Wellesley College.

Yack grew up in Toronto, where his family was well known for their achievements in the boxing ring. (One uncle, who fought under the name “Baby Yack,” became the flyweight champion of Canada.) Staying in the United States after graduating from Harvard, Yack has taught at Princeton University, the University of Michigan and most recently, the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

A student of political theory and the history of political thought, Yack has a special interest in the relationship between community and democracy. He has published extensively in those areas, including books on European radicalism (*The Longing for Total Revolution*, 1986), community and conflict in Aristotelian political thought (*The Problems of the Political Animal*, 1993) and post-modernist critiques of liberal democracy (*The Fetishism of Modernities*, 1998). He is also the editor of a collection of essays on liberal democratic theory and is currently completing *Nation and Individual*, a book that focuses on the relationship between nationalism and our commitment to democratic principles of legitimacy.

## Racial and ethnic minorities less likely to survive cancer

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however, that making the recommended behavior changes reduced morbidity and improved treatment outcomes.”

The SIHP found that interventions to improve diagnosis and treatment are especially lacking among the older, racial/ethnic population. According to the researchers, very few studies of physical activity, nutrition/weight management and multicomponent interventions with elders of color have been conducted. Strategies to engage this population in cancer prevention must be identified and increased.

Differences in survival and treatment for several of the cancers were linked to failure of suspicious lesion follow-up exams and incomplete diagnostic work-ups. According to the researchers, since diagnosis for most cancers involves a multistep process, with many practitioners and procedures, the potential for failure in continuity of care is high.

“This is particularly true when patients face access barriers, and provider organizations that serve poor communities lack resources and systems to ensure follow-up,” said Capitman.

According to the researchers the incorporation of community health workers (CHW) into the health care

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system could improve accessibility and continuity of cancer prevention, detection and treatment services. Analysis of the 25 sites revealed that most programs trained CHWs to perform a very narrow scope of service, which consisted of educating the patient about screening without attention to individual follow-through of treatment.

The researchers found a greater potential to increase the CHW's role to include three services that would be culturally tailored to address racial and ethnic barriers. These are targeting behavioral health changes, ensuring necessary cancer screening, and supporting the patient through the process.

The first service would target behavioral health changes, including weight management, increased physical activity and smoking cessation. This health risk management service would employ the CHW to link Medicare beneficiaries to a regular source for

their primary care and screening, and help to solve insurance problems.

The second service would ensure and track necessary cancer screenings for the Medicare beneficiary as well as follow-up of questionable screening results. Within this service the CHW would send the patient reminders, follow up on missed visits, and link the patient to further preventive services in a timely manner.

The third service involves supporting the patient throughout cancer diagnosis, treatment and recurrence monitoring process. The role of the CHW throughout this third step includes making referrals to health-risk management programs, assistance with benefits coordination and health and social service referrals coordination.

The three-tier program design was incorporated to support Medicare's current structure, which reimburses for specific services. The structure of the program also allows CMS to easily track the costs and impacts of each individual service.

“Our findings prove that emerging, promising interventions exist for improving cancer detection, prevention and cancer treatment across racial, ethnic populations of Medicare beneficiaries,” said Capitman.

## Cardinal Kasper

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He warned that antisemitism presents a permanent struggle and may be a fixed condition. It is, he said, “a wound, which is still open.” And he added that the Church miscalculated by believing it had been overcome.

Father David C. Michael, the Catholic chaplain at Brandeis, said the University has “a prestigious voice to add to the [Christian-Jewish] dialogue.”

“I think we (Jews) all understand that this requires a response on our part,” said Rabbi Barry Starr, president of the Massachusetts Board of Rabbis. “We all need to gather together in a world where hatred and intolerance is rife. We take seriously our side of the relationship.”