

# BIU NEWS BYTES

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*All you need to know in a glance*

## PM Benjamin Netanyahu Gives Major Policy Address at BIU



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the Jewish Nation – and the world – during his landmark speech at Bar-Ilan University's Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies. BIU was a natural choice of venue for this important event due to BESA's stellar international standing as one of the nation's top political think tanks, and the University's reputation for tolerance and excellence.

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## BESA Researcher: Flu Pandemics Hiding in the Ice

The next flu pandemic may be hibernating in an Arctic glacier or frozen Siberian lake, waiting for rising temperatures to set it free. Then birds can deliver it back to civilization.

New research suggests an influenza virus could go into hiding in the ice when earlier generations of humans, birds or other hosts developed immunity strong enough to drive the virus to extinction. It's a sort of evolutionary loophole.

**Dr. (Lt. Col. [Res.] Dany Shoham**, of the Department of Political Studies, and a senior researcher specializing in biological warfare at BIU's Begin-Sadat (BESA)







## Multidisciplinary Research on Men

### Majoring in Masculinity at BIU

BIU's newest graduate degree track - focusing on the study of man - is being offered under the auspices of the school's gender studies program. "I'm not aware of any other graduate program that focuses solely on masculinity, much less with this level of interdisciplinary study, including psychological and sociological components. It's certainly one of the only programs of its kind," said **Dr. Danny Kaplan**, of the BIU Department of Sociology and Anthropology, who is spearheading the program.

The program plans to cover various aspects of masculine expression, ranging from its significance in everyday society to how it plays out in politics and consumer culture. "In politics, for example, masculine socialization poses dilemmas and also advantages as far as cooperation is concerned," said Kaplan. "Masculinity in politics plays an important role, as most of our politicians are men and are often socialized to combine competition and aggression with alliances and friendships."

There will also be focus on topics such as how men identify themselves as father figures, and how that plays out from the time their child is born, onward into his or her early years of development. "Even though the male role as a father has changed dramatically in recent decades, and men are increasingly more active as fathers, the overall change has been relatively minor," Kaplan said. "But we want to look into it more; it needs to be researched," he continued. "We'll also be looking at how men are portrayed and targeted in advertising," Kaplan said. "How men have come to care more about grooming themselves and how they look." "Up until now, we've looked at men mainly to talk about women's rights and gender equality – sort of as a backdrop," Kaplan said, "We want to focus on man in his own right, with his own problems."

*The Jerusalem Post*

### BIU Researcher Proves Men Like to Cuddle their Babies

New research provides evidence that men really **are** hard-wired for parenting. Of course, few topics are more complicated than male-vs.-female brain chemistry, or parenting impulses in general. But the study, by **Dr. Ruth Feldman**, of the BIU Department of Psychology, and an adjunct assistant professor at Yale University, suggests men are just as well equipped as women to enjoy cuddling their babies.

After measuring 80 couples' levels of oxytocin — the "cuddle hormone" that supports touching, hugging, holding and trusting others — Dr. Feldman found fathers as well as mothers post increases after childbirth. Oxytocin has a powerful effect on the brain, making people feel less anxious and more calm, trusting and connected.

Oxytocin is usually studied in connection with women and bonding, labor, delivery and breastfeeding. But fathers of newborns actually have oxytocin levels comparable to mothers, based on Dr. Feldman's findings. The parents' levels exceeded those of single men and women who weren't in romantic relationships, she says, suggesting infant care stimulates the hormone for both parents.

The more the men in the study cuddled their babies, the more their oxytocin levels rose. "It's like a feedback loop," Dr. Feldman says. "The more you touch, the more oxytocin you have; the more oxytocin, the more you touch. But you need to initiate this feedback loop, by holding and touching and kissing your baby." Also, she found a link between the oxytocin levels of partners. Mothers' levels predicted fathers' levels later on, "as if fathers somehow get biologically attuned to their wives," Dr. Feldman says.

Dr. Feldman's findings might help explain that rush of emotion many men experience upon seeing their babies born and holding them. *The Week*





criminal or terrorist activity, however, is the difficulty of getting data from thousands of agencies who keep their own records and data bases.

Enter Israel's MindCite, a data mining intelligence company, whose technology was originally developed by **Dr. Uri Hanani**, of BIU's Department of Information Science, and Dr. Shahaf Gal, of Harvard University. Its technology gathers a huge amount of information on key topics, integrates it with data from various sources, and presents a coherent visual map with precise, focused information to intelligence officers.

The system has extra smarts such as artificial intelligence, and neural networks to discover hidden relationships. Semantic trawling connects the dots in the relationship between people, places, objects, events, and ideas and prioritizes the results for clients.

The Homeland Security sector, and other agencies that deal with preventive security breaches, are growing. On-line banking is another area where the need is great. Now twenty-first century detectives can count on MindCite 24 hours a day, to crack a case or to prevent one from happening. *Israel 21c*



## BIU Educator: Israeli Students are Underachieving

**Prof. Zemira Mevarech**, of BIU's School of Education, coordinates the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in Israel.

According to a special report issued by the OECD recently, only 10 percent of Israeli students reached the highest level of achievement in any of the three topics covered by the international PISA exam - reading,

math and science. This is considerably lower than the international average. Overall, 18 percent of students scored at the highest level in at least one subject in the 2006 exam, on which the report is based.

Moreover, the report found, even among outstanding students, Israel had one of the highest percentages of any participating country of students who said they are not interested in pursuing higher education or working in the sciences.

Unsurprisingly, the report found that a whopping 87 percent of Israel's top students came from relatively well-off families, who can afford to either attend schools that offer extra classes or pay for private lessons. That extra schooling evidently makes a difference: The report found that in the sciences, for instance, Israel's top performers studied science an average of four hours a week, compared to less than 1.5 hours among the lowest achievers. In many other countries, in contrast, high performance was less closely linked with socioeconomic status, noted Prof. Mevarech, who has made it her personal mission to train the country's top educators at BIU to address this problem. *Ha'aretz*

## BIU Alumna as "Memory Detective"

Authors of Holocaust memoirs tend to address an anonymous audience, or sometimes relatives, and thus include them in the act of writing. This personal act is motivated by a sense of mission: to provide testimony and to perpetuate memories among younger generations and, specifically, among the people of Israel. As Hulda Campagnano - an Italian who survived the Holocaust, immigrated to Israel and testified in Adolf Eichmann's trial - wrote in her 1947 memoir "Testimony": "My dear grandchildren, I wrote these pages for you. They cost me in pain and tears, but now I'm finishing them. I again turn my gaze forward, together with you and your dreams."

Literary researcher **Dr. Shilhav Kest**, an alumna of BIU's Department of Jewish History, is focusing on

the moment when private memory becomes public, collective - on what she calls "memory narrative." She uses the term to describe memoirs of certain World War II survivors, as distinguished from canonical Holocaust literature like that of Primo Levi, Eli Wiesel and Aharon Appelfeld. In her doctoral thesis, Kest defines this form of narrative as a genre unto itself, in which literary elements and the act of bearing witness are closely intertwined.

Kest believes the genre and its authors have suffered an injustice, which stems from the dismissive attitude literary and history scholars have taken toward them, an attitude that pours salt on the survivors' open wounds.

"Historians dismiss 'memory narrative' and are dubious about the credibility of the testimonies revealed in it, while literary researchers simply claim it isn't literature," Kest explains. "But these are unique texts, which stand on their own and have their own narratives - these are not regular narratives." *Ha'aretz*

