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Supported by a Research Scientist Career Development Award from the NIMH, Dr. Downey did research on sexual orientation in women, Turner Syndrome, and mental health effects of infertility in women. She was the first investigator to demonstrate that sex hormones in homosexual and heterosexual women did not differ. She has published articles and chapters on adolescent sexuality, premenstrual affective symptoms, the treatment of psychiatric disorders during pregnancy and post-partum, cancers of the reproductive tract in women, and (with Dr. Friedman) many articles and one book on sexual orientation.

In 2008, Dr. Downey was named the first Victor J. Teichner Award Scholar for teaching in psychodynamic psychiatry by the American Academy of Psychoanalysis & Dynamic Psychiatry. She was a visiting professor at the University of Kentucky in Lexington from 2009 - 2011.

Dr. Downey works in NYC where she practices dynamic psychiatry and psychoanalysis.