

Program in Families, Gender, and Sexualities

Revised: October 24, 2005

The program in the Sociology of Families, Gender, and Sexualities offers students diverse opportunities to study a range of contemporary and interrelated issues. Students' training based on course work and research emphasizes emerging theoretical and methodological issues related to U.S. and cross-national research. Faculty emphasize life course, symbolic interactionist, social constructionist, and feminist theoretical perspectives as well as both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Courses tend to highlight diversity, social inequality, and social policy themes.

Students interested in families and relationships can study different aspects of family life and individuals' involvement in a full range of socially supportive and intimate/sexual relationships, typically using a gender lens. Main substantive areas include sexualities; reproduction; family and household demography; the construction of families and relationships of various types; union formation, negotiation, and dissolution among persons from various sexual, race/ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds; parent-child relations across the life course; family gerontology; and work and families.

Students interested in gender can study how gender shapes identities, interactions, institutions, and inequalities as well as how gender is shaped by race, class, and sexualities. Main substantive areas include intersections of race/class/gender; family; work; social inequalities; sexualities; bodies/embodiment; constructions of identities; men and masculinities; and feminism(s) and feminist methodologies. Students may also pursue a graduate certificate from the U.F. Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research.

Faculty collaborate regularly with graduate and undergraduate students on research projects. Students should feel free to contact individual faculty members to discuss options for getting involved in particular research projects. A recent sampling of faculty research include (complete information about participating faculty can be found on their individual websites):

Families, Relationships, Children and Childbearing Attitudes

- **Attitudes about Childlessness and Parenthood:** Examination of the predictors and correlates of attitudes about childlessness among adults in the U.S, using several nationally representative surveys (NSFH, GSS, MIDUS). These quantitative analyses have focused on gender differences in attitudes and on the different predictors of positive or neutral compared to negative attitudes. A survey of undergraduate students is also examining students' perceptions of childless couples (Koropecj-Cox).
- **Historical Patterns of Family Change:** This work uses historical census data to examine change in family patterns over the past century. There is a clear link between family change and modernization processes—particularly when considering the impact of regional population shifts on family ties and the impact of changing industrial patterns on individual's earnings and employment prospects. Bures' article, "The Racial Crossover in Family Complexity in the US," (with Frances Goldscheider, 2003) examines racial differences in the living arrangements of unmarried adults over a 50-year period.
- **Well-being Among Children:** A set of papers examines the impact of health on school outcomes among Latino children (Zsembik and Johnson, "Functional Health among Schoolage Latino Children"). Another paper focuses on the health of grandparents and grandchildren in custodial grandparent households. An interdisciplinary team is developing a proposal to a private

foundation to secure funding for research on educational achievement of Latino children in Florida.

- **Stepchildren and Identity:** Proposed research to study stepchildren's identity construction experiences and well-being in stepfather families (Marsiglio).

Gender and Sexualities

- **Parents with GLBT Children:** A qualitative analysis of the interpretive and identity work of heterosexual allies in the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) movement, focusing on parents with GLBT children. (Broad, "Social Movement Selves" Sociological Perspectives).
- **Gendering Bodies:** A theoretical overview of the ways in which bodies are gendered in the realms of sexuality and reproduction, sport, and work. This will be published by Alta Mira Press in 2007 as part of the Gender Lens series. (Crawley, Foley, and Shehan).

Families and Aging

- **Race/ethnic Differences in the Families and Households of Older Adults :** One research theme focuses on the cultural and economic experiences that produce higher levels of family care among Latinos, including various types of family household coresidence. (Zsembik and Bonilla 2000 "Eldercare and the Changing Family in Puerto Rico", *Journal of Family Issues*). Another theme focuses on change in the family and nonfamily composition of African American and white households (Peek, Koropecyk-Cox, Zsembik and Coward 2003 'Race Comparisons of the Household Dynamics of Older Adults," Research on Aging).
- **Cross-national Research on the Prevalence of Childlessness and Singlehood Among Older Adults:** This research includes analyses of census data on the living arrangements and community contexts of older childless and unmarried adults in Eastern Europe (Koropecyk-Cox).

Families and Health

- **Care-giving Grandmothers :** A quantitative analysis of "skipped generation" families in which grandparents are providing care for their grandparents while neither biological parent is present. This intergenerational research examines the factors associated with the psychosocial well-being of caregiving grandmothers. Significant predictors of grandmother's depression include being on welfare, receiving social service support with childcare, access to healthcare, and poverty (Mills, Gomez-Smith, Z., & DeLeon, J. (2005). Skipped Generation Families: Sources of Psychosocial Distress Among Grandmothers of Grandchildren Who Live in Homes Where Neither Parent Is Present. *Marriage and Family Review*, 37(1/2):191-212.)
- **Families' Perceptions and Decisions about Medical Treatment:** A quantitative analysis of members of 3-generation families is used to evaluate life-sustaining medical treatment attitudes and decision factors for oneself and one's parents. Results show that older generations (G1) perceived mental capacity, family burden, and level of pain as the most important considerations. Among the middle generation (G2), family burden was not an important factor, but the type of life-sustaining treatment was important. The youngest generation (G3) was similar to the other two generations in that mental capacity and pain were important, but a smaller percentage of G3s considered this important (Mills & Wilmoth, J. (2002). Intergenerational Differences and

Similarities in Life-Sustaining Treatment Attitudes and Decision Factors. *Family Relations*, 51(1):46-54.)

- **Family, Health, and Labor Force Transitions in Later Midlife** : This research examines the relationships between family, health, and labor force transitions in later midlife using data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS). Of particular interest is the relationship between changes in employment status, children's leaving home, and residential mobility (Bures).
- **Family Support for Persons Living with HIV/AIDS**: This is an ongoing, interdisciplinary research project (i.e., sociology, nursing, counseling psychology, and medicine) examining the social support exchanged between HIV+ men and their family members. Two-hundred and twenty-seven HIV+ men from north Florida have been followed for three years. Extensive biomedical, social psychological, and behavioral measures have been collected. Papers have focused on men's decisions to disclose their HIV sero-status to their mothers (Shehan et al., 2005, *Family Relations*), consequences of disclosure for mental health and well-being (Arce, Uphold, and Shehan, 2005), impact of institutional and existential spirituality on mental health and risk taking behaviors (Frame, Uphold, and Shehan, 2005, *Counseling and Values*), and emotional bonds between HIV+ sons and their mothers (Shehan, Frame, and others, 2005).
- **Household Health Dynamics**: I am revising a positively reviewed proposal and a paper on how physical and cognitive health of husbands and wives influence the other partner, and how the collective health needs of couples are managed by themselves, their families, and formal health care delivery systems. (Comorbidity and Disability within Households; Individual and Household Comorbidity among Older Married Couples). I am developing a research proposal to collect data on transnational Puerto Rican families and households that asks how they use kin and nonkin networks to secure health and health care resources ("Transnationalism and Health Among Puerto Rican Families.") (Zsembik)

Men and Masculinities (Family and Sexuality)

- **Fathering in Context**: Future empirical research will build upon a theoretical framework presented in an edited volume on fathering. It explores how aspects of physical and social spaces influence men's identity work as fathers and their involvement with their children. (Marsiglio, Roy, and Fox, Eds., 2005, *Situated Fathering: A Focus on Physical and Social Spaces*).
- **Men and Kids** : A qualitative study focusing on men's paid and volunteer work with kids outside a family context (e.g., teachers, coaches, youth pastors, Big Brothers, Boy Scout leaders, 4-H club leaders, probation officers, Boys/Girls club staff). The project explores why men get involved, how they are engaged in youth work, and how their efforts affect kids and the men's personal development. Some analyses will focus on how men's family experiences as fathers and husbands/partners are related to their youth work (Marsiglio).
- **Stepfathers and Identity**: A qualitative analysis of how men develop and manage their identities as stepfathers based on in-depth interviews with a sample of stepfathers, birth mothers, and stepchildren (Marsiglio, 2004, *Stepdads: Stories of Love, Hope, and Repair*).
- **Young Men as Procreative Beings**: A qualitative analysis of the social psychology of young men's procreative identities based on in-depth interviews with a sample of single men aged 16-30 (Marsiglio and Hutchinson, 2002, *Sex, Men, and Babies: Stories of Awareness and Responsibility*).

Gender and Older Adults

- **Childlessness in Midlife and Older Adulthood:** On-going research on the prevalence and meanings of childlessness among older adults. This research includes analyses of U.S. survey data examining attitudes toward childlessness and the relative psychological and social well-being of childless adults. Analyses of the Survey of Midlife in the U.S. (MIDUS) also examine the diversity among childless adults, including infertility or other health issues, the timing of marriage, sexual orientation, and attitudes about childlessness and family (funded by the MIDUS Pilot Grant Program). Qualitative analyses examine the life histories and gendered experiences of childlessness among older men and women (Koropecj-Cox).
- **Demographic Analysis of Lifelong-single Older Adults:** A review and secondary analysis of survey data on the demographic characteristics and relative well-being of lifelong-single older adults. The project, a collaboration with psychologist Susan Bluck, is funded by the Anthony Marchionne Foundation. It includes a qualitative-quantitative survey of middle-aged and older adults who have remained single most of their lives and are childless. The survey, entitled "Life Paths and Strategies," examines the links between the perceptions and experiences of singlehood, social supports, and psychological well-being (Koropecj-Cox).
- **Body Image and Beauty Work Among Aging Women:** A qualitative study of women's perceptions of body changes associated with aging (Shehan and Koropecj-Cox).
- **Divorce and Retirement:** This research examines the impact of divorce on the transition to retirement for individuals in later midlife using data from the Health and Retirement Study (Bures).

Gender, Race, and Class

- **Latina Mobilization:** A qualitative oral histories account of Latina mobilization in Mexico and the U.S. Southwest that looks at how the socio-political contexts women find themselves in shapes organizing strategies (Peña, book manuscript under review titled "*Mexican and Mexican American Women Beyond Borders*").

Gender and Work

- **Women Ministers:** Qualitative and quantitative analyses of women ministers' work and family experiences (Shehan and Wiggins Frame).
- **Hispanic/Latino Women and the Church:** A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the role of Hispanic/Latino churches and congregations in community work. The research looks at the challenges to women's leadership roles in community organizing and church leadership (Milagros Peña, Edwin Hernández, and Melissa Mauldin report published by the Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame, April 2005 titled "Hispanic Clergy and the Task of Ministry in Urban America").
- **Race and Women's Work Place Interactions:** Quantitative analyses of black and white women's work place interactions, using the National Survey of the Changing Work Force (Shehan).

As the aforementioned list suggests, the size of the faculty and the range of course/research opportunities permit an unusual breadth of training. In addition to their work with general sociological journals, faculty have published in and served on the editorial boards of the major family and gender journals, including *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Journal of Family Issues*, *Family Relations*, *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, and *Fathering: A Journal of Theory, Research, and Practice About Men as Fathers*; *Gender and Society*; *International Journal of Sexuality and Gender Studies*; *Advances in Gender Research*; and *Race, Class & Gender*. Faculty have been elected to state and national offices in the National Council on Family Relations, which is the primary professional affiliation for scholars interested in these topics, and faculty serve on the Executive Board of U.F.'s Institute for Child and Adolescent Research and Evaluation.

Relevant Links

Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research:

<http://www.ncrw.org/digest/uf florida.htm>

National Council on Family Relations (NCFR):

<http://www.nefr.org/>

Center on Children & the Law:

<http://www.law.ufledu/centers/childlaw/>

National Council for Research on Women:

<http://www.ncrw.org/>

Sociologists for Women in Society (SWS):

<http://newmedia.colorado.edu/socwomenj>

Participating Faculty

Monika Ardelt
Kendal Broad
Tanya Koropecj-Cox
William Marsiglio
Terry Mills
Milly Peña
John Scanzoni
Constance L. Shehan
Heman Vera
Barbara A. Zsembik

Course Descriptions

SYD 6820: Men and Masculinities (Course pending state-wide curriculum committee review)

This seminar explores how men's lives across the live course are affected by and influence the

gendered social order. Attention is given to how masculinities are constructed in diverse contexts. The main objective is to provide students with a relatively broad survey of contemporary theoretical and empirical social science literature relevant to the subfield of men and masculinities, with particular attention given to key domains of men's lives (e.g., sex, work, fatherhood, friendship, sports, and health). Students will also be shown how expressions of gender and masculinities are embedded within sociopolitical and sociohistorical contexts.

SYO 6107: American Families

This course deals with such issues as premarital relations, mate selection, gender roles, marital quality and stability, parent-child relations, and kinship. American family systems and relations are examined in comparative and historical contexts. The emphasis throughout the course is on theoretically-based explanations of family behaviors and relations, informed by the most recent empirical research.

SYO 6126: Seminar in Family Theory

This course acquaints students with a breadth of theoretical perspectives on contemporary families and intimate relationships. The primary goal is theoretical understanding so that public policy, applied programs, and intervention strategies can be based on generalizable knowledge.

SYO 6175: Seminar in Family Research

This seminar examines recent empirical studies of family and intimate relations in such areas as premarital relations, marriage behavior, marital quality and stability, marital roles, parent-child relations, and kinship relations. It focuses on the role of empirical research in the construction of theory. Critical unanswered questions in each substantive area are highlighted, along with possible strategies for developing answers to these questions.

SYP 6065: Sociology of Human Sexualities

This course examines theoretical and conceptual issues, empirical research, and social policies germane to human sexuality with a primary focus on the U.S. Topics addressed include sexual identity and orientation, childhood and adolescent sexuality, sexual behavior in and out of marriage, incest, the impact of changing gender roles on sexual relations, the implications of AIDS, date rape, and the relationship between sexuality and the socio-political process.

SYD 7808 Reproduction and Gender

This seminar will examine key reproductive issues, primarily within the context of U.S. society. The principle topics to be covered include: the social construction of reproductive values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, and practices; the relationship between gender and reproduction, fertility and infertility; contraception; life course issues and reproduction; abortion; alternative pathways to parenthood including surrogacy, adoption, and assisted reproductive strategies; the social implications of reproductive technologies, and the social control of reproduction (policy and legal issues).

SYA 7933 Special Study in Sociology

This is a revolving special topics course that may be offered from time to time on issues such as gender relations, gender and race, gender and reproduction, and public policy concerns.

Other Graduate Course Offerings Currently Being Formalized:

Constructing Families

Family and Household Demography

Feminist Perspectives on Families and Intimate Relationships

Gender and Aging

Race, Gender, and Class

Sociology of Latinos and Latinas in the U.S.