

FAILURE IS IMPOSSIBLE!



Feminism and Family Studies Section Newsletter
National Council on Family Relations
Number 11, March 1999

Report from the Chair

Greetings to everyone, and happy 1999!

I'd like to take this opportunity to say thanks to those of you who played such a significant role in making the 1998 conference so successful. We had several innovative sessions. Joan Jurich for organized the symposium on The Use of Power in Academic Relationships: Feminist Reflections. It was well attended and very stimulating, and the presenters are exploring ideas for publishing the papers. The workshop on cooperative learning, led by Katherine Allen, Kaitilin O'Shea, Karen Wilcox, and Karla Soukup was also stimulating. The feminist mentoring roundtables, organized by Shelley MacDermid and Brenda Seery, were another successful new format. Thanks to all of these people for their contributions in making this another energizing conference.

I'd also like to thank the discussants for all of our sessions: Karen Blaisure, Lee Ann DeReus, Renate Houts, Leigh Leslie, Stephen Marks, and Karen Wilcox.

Thanks, too, to Shelley MacDermid and her committee who reviewed papers and proposals to select this year's awards winners. Congratulations to Susan C. Harris as winner of the Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective, and to Susan Freedman and Hilary Lips as winners of the Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship Paper Award.

During our section business meeting, we spent quite a bit of time discussing the proposed restructuring of the NCFR Board of Directors (BOD), which would result in a significantly smaller board. Key concerns center around whether there will be adequate representation of persons of color, and whether the voices of the sections will be heard.

Several members of our section who are also on the current BOD helped to clarify these concerns. The role of the Elections Council (which is an elected body) is key to ensuring representation of the diversity of NCFR members on proposed slates. Section chairs will continue to serve on the Program Committee, to meet together to identify concerns across sections, in addition to having a scheduled time to meet with the Board.

**1997-1999 FFS Section
Executive Committee**

Section Chair & Program Chair..... Donna L. Sollie
(dsollie@humsci.auburn.edu)
Vice-Chair & Awards Chair..... Shelley MacDermid
(shelley@vm.cc.purdue.edu)
Secretary/Treasurer..... Mark Fine
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Newsletter Editor..... Stephen Marks
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S/NP Representatives..... Beth C. Catlett
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..... Kaitilin O'Shea
(oshea@fas.harvard.edu)
Teaching Coordinator..... Joan Jurich
(jurichj@cfs.purdue.edu)
Past Chair & Nominating Chair..... Leigh Leslie
(ll11@uemail.umd.edu)

The NCFR membership voted overwhelmingly in support of the new governance policy—this vote reflects the level of support that was apparent in our business meeting discussion. An important dimension of the re-structuring is that the principal work for the next year will be a large-scale consultation with all NCFR members to dialogue on where we want NCFR to go: what do we stand for, what do we want to accomplish, what are our goals and priorities? The emphasis will be on the future, and it is the responsibility of all of us to think

seriously and creatively about what our future will be. So, take advantage of all opportunities to let your voice be heard as we move toward the next millennium! "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." (Margaret Mead, in *The Utne Reader*, 1992.)

One item brought up at our section meeting aptly reflected the importance of identifying and discussing issues relevant to the identities within the organization, and of letting our voices be heard. Stephen Marks raised the issue of whether the title of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* adequately reflects the diversity of the NCFR membership, the readers of the journal, the topics covered in the journal, and the missions of NCFR and the journal. We voted to form a committee, chaired by Stephen Marks, to discuss this topic. The upcoming survey of the NCFR membership will provide another important outlet for raising these issues, and demonstrating how many people are committed to diversity. Please share your thoughts about these issues with Stephen.

I've just received abstracts for this year's annual conference, "Borders, Boundaries, and Beacons: Diverse Families in Dynamic Societies." We have some exciting submissions, and I'm sure we'll have another excellent program. Plans are also underway for invited speakers and collaborative sponsorships with other sections--I'll keep you posted as things develop!

I'd also like to encourage you to consider submitting proposals to the TCRM workshop (deadline is April 1). Mike Johnson has indicated that he is particularly interested in proposals from members of our section, and it would be a great opportunity to highlight feminist perspectives.

One of the reasons that our section is so vital is the enthusiasm that the members bring to all aspects of the section--so please stay in touch with me and share your ideas and suggestions for the section. Also, please encourage others to join our section. You can reach me at dsollie@humsci.auburn.edu, or call 334-844-3230.

Warm wishes,

Donna Sollie

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

This spring we will be electing a new slate of officers to serve the section over the next two years. The nominating committee is pleased with the outstanding slate of candidates who have agreed to run for office this term. In hopes of providing the membership with a better introduction to the candidates, the nominating committee has asked them each to submit brief biographical statements to the newsletter. Following are the statements from the candidates for all offices except Chair. The statements from the chair candidates will be published in the spring NCFR Report. Ballots will be mailed to you in the spring from NCFR. Don't forget to vote!

Leigh Leslie

VICE-CHAIR AND AWARDS CHAIR

Masako Ishii-Kuntz

University of California, Riverside and
University of California Tokyo Study Center

Academic/research interests: Fatherhood in comparative perspectives, Division of household labor, Asian American families.

Previous service to section: Nominating Committee, Reviewer for Conference papers.

The FFS section membership is one of the most diverse memberships among NCFR sections. I would like to further diversify this section by including international scholars, practitioners and students who are dedicated to advancing our understanding of the issues and problems faced by families in the world. I have been genuinely impressed with the excitement of the FFS members ever since I joined the section. I would like to increase opportunities to network among membership not only at our meetings but also via electronic means such as creating the FFS homepage which would reach those interested in feminism and family issues worldwide.

**Only 8 more months till the FFSS
Business Meeting in Irvine, CA--
"The World's First Feel-Good Business
Meeting"**

VICE-CHAIR AND AWARDS CHAIR, (cont.)

Anisa Mary Zvonkovic

Human Development and Family Sciences,
Oregon State University.

Academic/research interests: close relationships; identities and commitments; work and family.

Previous service to section: Member of first FFS teaching subcommittee; Nominating Committee; reviewed applications for FFS presentations at NCFR meetings almost every year. Member of FFS section since its founding.

Rewarding good work in family studies from a feminist perspective is arguably the most important of FFS section activities. First, it makes visible the excellent work that section members are doing. Second, it supports this work in a tangible way. I would gain great personal satisfaction, as section vice-chair, from doing the behind the scenes work necessary to publicize the FFS awards, to recruit reviewers, and to coordinate the review process. I am energized from working with my feminist colleagues and would welcome the opportunity to work with other section officers.

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Elizabeth M. Johnson

Ph.D. candidate in Child Development and Family Relationships at the University of Texas at Austin.

Academic/research interests: My research focuses on processes of parental decision making that shape beliefs about family roles and children's needs. I am committed to research and applied work with families that supports parents' motivations of care and love, and challenges parents to rethink assumptions about the value of caregiving work.

Previous service to section: The FFS Section has been a source of support and inspiration since I first joined in 1995. I have reviewed conference proposals and participated in section-sponsored sessions.

As Secretary/Treasurer of the Section, I'd like to build our endowment with an ongoing fundraising project so we can increase our awards for feminist

work with families. I'd also like to explore ways that the section can encourage partnerships between feminists in academia and those in community-based organizations.

Brenda L. Seery

Assistant Professor of Family Studies, Purdue University.

Academic/research interests: the gendering of domestic labor, particularly emotion work and other forms of "invisible" work; the life experiences and survival strategies of rural, low-income women and their families; and feminist pedagogy.

Previous service to section: I have been a member of the FFSS since 1991. During this time, I have served as a conference proposal reviewer and Awards Committee member. In 1992, I received the Outstanding Proposal from a Feminist Perspective Award from the section. In 1998, I assisted in organizing and compiling the FFSS Syllabi and Teaching Resource Packet.

By serving as Secretary/Treasurer, I hope to contribute to the section's on-going effort to promote feminist perspectives in family studies, while continuing to establish strong networks of support among feminist scholars in the field. For me, one aspect of the larger endeavor to insure that feminism maintains a strong voice in family studies entails continued support and fund raising for the Jessie Bernard Fund.

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Michael P. Johnson

Sociology, Women's Studies, and African and African American Studies, Penn State University.

Academic/research interests: Feminist family sociology, social psychology of close relationships, domestic violence.

Previous service to section: Gathering petition signatures for founding of section, frequent reviewing of abstracts, presentations at section sessions, mentor, contributions to syllabi set, and I don't think I've ever missed a business meeting (not much to brag about since they are the most fun business meetings in the organization).

Michael P. Johnson (cont.)

The Newsletter is the primary means of keeping in touch with all section members, and I would be honored to have an opportunity to do my best to keep it as interesting and informative as it always has been.

Karen L. Wilcox

Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Family Studies, Ohio University.

Academic/research interests: Adult sibling relationships, family diversity, gerontology, and young adults. I am also interested in feminist pedagogy and the integration of service-learning courses.

Previous service to section: Serving a term as student/new professional representative, reviewing abstracts for annual meetings, serving as a recorder and discussant at annual meetings, and contributing to the second edition of the Teaching Syllabi Collection.

I am interested in serving as newsletter editor as a way to continue to promote the encouraging nature of the FFS section that has been a supportive avenue for involvement in NCFR, especially for students and new professionals.

STUDENT/NEW PROFESSIONAL

Phyllis A. Greenberg

Assistant Professor, Center for Community Studies, St. Cloud State University, St. Cloud, MN

Academic/research interests: Development of a sense of self over time, intersection of identities, how one established a sense of community and with whom.

Previous service to section: Presenter/recorder. Assist with music selection at annual dance.

Statement of Interest: I would like to increase my formal participation with the Feminism Section and NCFR. I have appreciated the hard work others have done and now would like to do the same. I also want to help insure that the dance/party maintains its reputation as a fun place for members to come together and be themselves.

Kelley J. Hall

Department of Sociology, The College of William and Mary.

Academic/research interests: Child transportation work; gendered division of invisible family work; lesbian parenthood. Previous service to section: Besides attending section meetings and sessions at the conference, this would be my first official service to the section. I was the Student/NP Representative to the NCFR Finance Committee from 1995 to 1997.

As the Student/NP representative for this section, my primary goal would be to enhance students' and new professionals' opportunities to network and exchange teaching/research skills with professional or tenured members of this section and with NCFR as a whole. I hope to continue the effective tradition of mentorship and collegiality within the section by organizing conference activities (e.g., skills exchanges, workshops) and by bringing student/np concerns and ideas to the section leaders. I will also foster the multidisciplinary and diverse connections among students and new professionals within all NCFR sections.

Jodie Hertzog

I am a second year doctoral student at Purdue University (emphasis in Family Studies, minor in Women's Studies). My research interest is the impact that sexual discourses generated in the media, family, and education have on young women's experiences of sexuality. This is my second year as a member of NCFR & the FFSS. I have been involved in the section by reviewing proposals, working on and contributing to the teaching packet, and acting as a recorder. I believe the student/new professional representative position would give me the opportunity to get further involved in the section and to bring a new member's perspective to the group.

Aine Humble

Ph. D. candidate in Human Development and Family Sciences at Oregon State University, majoring in Family Studies and minoring in Women's Studies.

I have returned to school after teaching full-time for three years at two Canadian Universities. My

Aine Humble (cont.)

research interest is in gender, families, and work. I have been a member of NCFR and FFS for several years. I have presented twice through this section at NCFR conferences, written an article for the newsletter on women's internet sources, and contributed three outlines to the syllabi package. As a recent new professional and current student, I hope to bring a unique and valuable perspective to the "student/new professional" position.

Tonja "Tee" Lee-Fall

I am taking continuing education classes at Immaculata College in Pennsylvania. Also, I am applying to doctoral programs in the area of Higher Educational Administration.

My research interests are family and child studies, women's issues, cultural issues, domestic violence, family violence, and education. I had the opportunity to explore women's studies in depth when I was writing my master's thesis. I worked with scholars who are well published in this area.

I would like this position to enhance my academic learning, to stay current on the research of women's issues, to make important contacts for conversation, exchange of information, etc.

Kimberly Updegraff

Assistant Professor, Department of Family Resources and Human Development at Arizona State University.

I am seeking the position of Student/New Professional Representative for the Feminist and Family Studies section so that I can become more actively involved as a section member. I have been a member of NCFR and the Feminist and Family Studies section for the past three years. As a recent graduate and new professional myself (I am in my second year as an, I think that I am in a good position to represent the needs and interests of both graduate students and new professionals.

WANTED: TCRM PROPOSALS

As current Chair of the Theory Construction and Research Methods Workshop, I would love to get many proposals from FFS members. *It's not too late!* The deadline is April 1. See TCRM website: <http://www.personal.psu.edu/mpj/tcrm99.htm>

Mike Johnson

The Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Straight Alliance

The LGBTSA list is now available for subscription. We discussed the creation of this list during meetings of both the FFSS and the LGBT Caucus in Milwaukee. This list has been established to facilitate the sharing of information among researchers, educators, and practitioners concerned with LGBT people and families.

To subscribe send a message to: LISTSERV@ASU.EDU. Leave tsubject line blank and in the body of the message issue the command `SUBSCRIBE LGBTSA First_Name Last_Name` where First_Name Last_Name is replaced by your name. You will receive a message in return asking you to confirm your subscription request. You must confirm within 72 hours.

I hope you join us and that we create a wonderful place for lively and productive discussions.

Batya Hyman

SECTION SUMMARIES

*Families in a Global Context:
Media, Environment, and Peace
Milwaukee, WI Nov. 1998*

Gay and Lesbian Experiences

Attendance: 26

Recorder: Katie E. Mosack, M.A.

O'Shea, Kaitilin. "Through the kaleidoscope of Media and Culture: The Developmental Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Youth."

O'Shea conducted a qualitative analysis involving 26 gay and lesbian individuals from the ages of 18 to 29. These individuals were surprised about their emerging homosexual development. Further, they received no guidance from their heterosexual families, and, as a result, coming out was a major life event. Because of the stigma associated with a homosexual orientation, many of these individuals searched outside sources for information about what it means to be lesbian or gay. One of the most significant sources of such information was the media, which offered both positive and negative images about gay and lesbian selves. The visibility of gay and lesbian characteristics appeared to be freeing for some; for others, the damaging images

of "gay" criminals or flamboyant superstars provided more negative reflections. Either way, as O'Shea speculates, "reflections of self are gleaned from the wider culture," with respondents interpreting them along a wide continuum-- as affirmation and representation, feeling removed from them and not feeling a part of these representations, or as cause for redefinition of the larger world.

Oswald, Ramona F. "It's So Hard to Jam Yourself Into the Closet for a Day: GLBT Experiences at Family Weddings."

Oswald conducted an analysis of the ritual and heterosexism inherent in heterosexual weddings. Using feminist methodology, the author created nine focus groups consisting of lesbians, gay men, bisexual, and transgendered people. Oswald facilitated group discussion of the inherently heterosexist ritual of weddings. Heterosexist themes were discussed as they related to significant symbolic events occurring within weddings. Invitations, clothing, family photos, religious ceremonies, and dancing all provided opportunities for heterosexism to be enacted or resisted. Participants, in turn, viewed weddings as being a generally hollow experience, in which the love and commitment the ceremony purported to represent was not necessarily extended to the GLBT attendees.

Audre Lorde on Managing Multiple Selves

"As a Black lesbian feminist comfortable with the many different ingredients of my identity, and a woman committed to racial and sexual freedom from oppression, I find I am constantly being encouraged to pluck out some one aspect of myself and present this as the meaningful whole, eclipsing or denying the other parts of self. But this is a destructive and fragmenting way to live. My fullest concentration of energy is available to me only when I integrate all the parts of who I am, openly, allowing power from particular sources of my living to flow back and forth freely through all my different selves, without the restrictions of externally imposed definition. Only then can I bring myself and my energies as a whole to the service of those struggles which I embrace as part of my living" (from SISTER OUTSIDER, p. 120)

Reimann, Renate. "Lesbian Mothers at Work."

In her study of lesbian mothers, Reimann found that 86% of these women worked and most had a strong commitment to paid labor. Furthermore, they seemed to have a strong desire for financial independence, which contrasts to the research found in typical heterosexual marital relationships. None of the women studied indicated a desire to be taken care of. On the other hand, these mothers had no desire to carry the entire financial burden associated with parenting, and they seemed to have anxiety about being the primary breadwinner in parenting relationships. Unlike heterosexual relationships, in which women are more likely to abandon their careers to raise children, lesbian mothers were more likely to work. Finally, the author found that heterosexist assumptions affected lesbian birth mothers and co-mothers alike. Heterosexist assumptions about typical parenting relationships created cognitive dissonance among colleagues, and parental leave was not considered to be an option for some co-mothers (versus birth mothers).

Wright, Janet. M. "Invisible in the Media and Erased in School: The Experiences of Children of Lesbians Stranded in a Heterosexist Environment."

In a qualitative study of 5 lesbian families, Wright found that the anticipation, not the reality of violence or discrimination, scared the children. She described this as "free-floating anxiety." In actuality, few of these children were teased. In their developmental processes, the children reported experiences of "coming out" to their peers and teachers about their parents' homosexuality. In this process, they became quite adept at learning who they could come out to, and also how not to lie by avoiding the topic in conversation. From these interviews, Wright concluded that buffering children with positive images about what it means to be gay; exposing them to positive images of gay men and lesbians in the media; creating a community with other gay or lesbian families; celebrating diversity in all its forms; and role-playing different difficult situations the children might encounter in their environment are strategies that work to combat homophobia.

Ed.'s note: Additional section summaries may be published in the September newsletter.

ATTENTION: STUDENTS AND NEW PROFESSIONALS

THE FEMINISM AND FAMILY STUDIES SECTION OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON FAMILY RELATIONS ANNOUNCES 1999 AWARDS APPLICATIONS

The Feminism and Family Studies Section of the National Council on Family Relations is seeking applicants for TWO awards to be given at the November 1999 NCFR Annual Conference in Irvine, CA. Applicants do not need to be members of NCFR, but we welcome new members to our section and organization.

The Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective is given in honor of Jessie Bernard. Graduate students and new professionals (with up to five years post-doctoral work) are encouraged to apply for this award of \$750 to fund feminist research. Proposals will be reviewed for their potential contribution to feminist scholarship about families and the use of feminist frameworks and methods. Applications should include: a) an abstract of 100 words or less, b) a five page (maximum) proposal outlining the project's purpose, theoretical foundation, research methods, and potential contribution of feminist scholarship, c) a reference list, and d) a half-page budget. A summary of the recipient's research results will be published in the Feminism and Family Studies Section Newsletter, and the recipient will be asked to present a report of their project and findings at the 2000 NCFR Annual Conference. The award will be presented at the 1999 meeting; recipients will receive \$350 towards their travel.

The Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship Paper Award is accompanied by a gift of complimentary books and a \$250 cash award. Applications for this award are open to all graduate students and new professionals (with up to five years post-doctoral work). Papers should contribute to feminist scholarship about families and the use of feminist frameworks and methods, and should be accompanied by an abstract of no more than 150 words. Applicants should be the sole author or first author of the paper; both published and unpublished papers will be considered, although the paper should be at near-submission status. A summary of the paper will be published in the Feminism and Family Studies Newsletter, and the award will be presented at the 1999 NCFR Annual Conference. Recipients will receive \$350 towards their travel to the conference.

Authors should identify themselves only in a cover letter so all entries can be reviewed anonymously – all identifying references should be removed from the paper or proposal submission. In a cover letter, applicants should indicate whether they are currently a graduate student or when they received their Ph.D. The cover letter should also include the address(es), telephone number(s), and email address(es) of all authors. Letters of support are not required. Only one submission per category will be accepted from any applicant. To apply, send six copies of the proposal or paper by April 1, 1999 to:

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Next Deadline: Sept. 15, 1999

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and/or comments to:

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