Family Social Science: Past, Present, and Future

FSoS Celebrates 25th Year Anniversary

It was perfect timing for NCFR to hold its annual meeting in Minneapolis this past Fall. Why? Because the conference coincided with the 25th Anniversary Celebration of FSoS. Approximately 150 people, including current and former faculty members, departmental staff, and graduate students assembled in the atrium of McNeal Hall to share memories from the past, renew friendships, and to discuss the family field.

David Olson, the program’s emcee, started the celebration by introducing the Metropolitan Boys Choir of St. Paul. After the Choir sang, each person who attended the celebration was grounded in the heart and soul of FSoS by the sharing of personal perspectives and memories from North Hall, Berry House, and the last 25 years of FSoS by Keith McFarland and Mary Heltlsley, a former and the current college dean, respectively, and former FSoS department heads Richard Hey, Hamilton McCubbin, Jan Hogan, and current FSoS department head Hal Grotevant. Additional highlights included Gerry Neubeck, FSoS Professor Emeritus, reading a specially-written poem to the audience, and the presentation of a President’s Club plaque to Mary Ellen McFarland by Vice President Gene Allen.

While interspersed throughout the audience, the Choir sang again towards the end of the program and pulled at the heartstrings of the celebration’s attendants. The evening continued with pictures being taken, research topics being shared, and current issues in the family field being debated. It truly was a celebration of past and present accomplishments, and a call to everyone to continue the work from which so many children, youth, and families have benefited in the past.

See you all at the 50th Anniversary Celebration in 2019!
"We need to go beyond pathology, and study the family in its great variety, in its social context and its impact upon the economy, law, education - perhaps even upon religious thinking and practice."

by Richard Hey, FSoS Department Head 1970-1978

Prior to joining Gerry Neubek in 1964 on a marriage counseling post-doctoral program in the Minnesota Family Study Center, I headed the Family Life Education Program at the Marriage Council of Philadelphia in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania. When the Family Study Center's grant was terminated in 1970, I joined FSoS as Department Head.

Questions which would not be quieted about the work in both those settings centered around why, of the five universal social institutions, the family - the "basic social institution" - was the only one which had never developed an academic major and respectability as a field of graduate study. One could major in and identify oneself with government, economics, education, and religion, but the family was determinedly treated as contingent. FSoS offered the opportunity to explore some answers.

FSoS was strategically located in CHE which, at the time, had defined itself as multidisciplinary in its consumption of theory and research. In 1970, FSoS did not seem to have a clearly identifiable academic goal. It was, rather, a collection of courses, all designed NOT to challenge offerings in Sociology, Psychology, Anthropology, Economics, and Child Development. Our autonomy was accepted in only one area: Management. At last, we were an identified academic unit.

As Department Head, I based my actions on three assumptions: it was time to assert that the family is a legitimate subject for academic study, family study is a multidisciplinary enterprise and, family scholars should be well-grounded, well-rounded, and able to understand both research and service. Therefore, we resisted defining "programs" within the department. We met opposition from other University departments which interpreted our development as incursions into their territories. Nevertheless, our efforts began to attract students, some of whom had been accepted into other departments. Some students were told by other departments' faculty that they were "smart enough not to have to register in FSoS!"

In the last twenty-five years, FSoS has become a recognized center of excellence in the family field and designated as a graduate degree program in its own right; college deans and central administration ceased to ask what and where Family Social Science might be. The critical mass of family scholars at the U of MN hastened acceptance of our approach, resulting in a positive force toward developing theory, research, and methodology in family studies. We need to go beyond pathology, and study the family in its great variety, in its social context and its impact upon the economy, law, education - perhaps even upon religious thinking and practice.

I am of the opinion that the need [today] is to develop scholar-practitioners. In light of increasing rapidity of change and intercultural confrontations there is much work ahead. We are in much the same situation as Alice, when the Red Queen told her she would have to run just to stay where she was! I hope the next twenty-five years will be as stimulating and as much fun as the past twenty-five have been for me.
"I think to some extent the discipline and the department are fictions and for me the reality has been in the interpersonal encounters (including the painful ones) and in the efforts to think new and interesting thoughts."

by Paul C. Rosenblatt, Most Senior FSoS Faculty Member

I had hoped never to be in the role of an old-timer writing brief remarks about a quarter of a century of organizational and disciplinary history. Even without a word limit it would be hard to give a reasonably accurate picture. I think to some extent the department and the discipline are fictions and for me the reality has been in the interpersonal encounters (including the painful ones) and in the efforts to think new and interesting thoughts.

Three months after I started teaching here in 1969, Donald R. Bender, who was chair of FSoS, died. As the only tenured, Ph.D. faculty member I became chair. I had two tenure-track faculty positions to fill and more power than department heads have nowadays to shape the direction of the department. I explored making FSoS a family-focused applied anthropology program in which ethnographic field work was the preferred research method and work with whole families in their everyday contexts was the preferred practice mode. However, I was persuaded that jobs for students lay with disciplinary organizations and identities, so I decided to hire in a way that would tie FSoS to the NCFR and the American Association of Marriage and Family Counselors (now AAMFT). Perhaps my smartest act as chair was to hire Richard N. Hey, president-elect of NCFR and past-president of AAMFC, to replace me as chair. His connection to those organizations and his knowledge and wisdom were of enormous value, though perhaps his charm, energy, and organizational savvy were of greater importance in giving FSoS a strong start toward its current focus and reputation.

When I came here, FSoS was a sleepy little division in a resource-starved School of Home Economics. There was a great deal of faculty interaction across disciplinary lines, which I valued. I also valued the emphasis on providing women students and faculty encouragement and support to learn, grow, and achieve.

Today, I don’t think there is a “family field,” though NCFR and AAMFT represent the interests of thousands of people who study and serve families. People in many other disciplines, professions, and walks of life also study and serve families. Contact with these people has in some ways expanded the NCFR and AAMFT version of the field, and so have the policy makers, the mass media, ideologues, and others outside of the academic world who have mostly ignored the family field but given us all more to think about. The family field has also seemed to me to become more aware of American society in the past 25 years, moving (however ponderously) toward greater openness to the experiences of people of color, women, gays and lesbians, and many others who were almost invisible in the textbooks and journals of 25 years ago.

I think that future departmental changes will reflect processes going on in higher education and throughout the society. I think the department will be forced to move toward richer and more productive connections with other disciplines. I think it will move to the big project model of science, with many students and faculty working on funded projects. And I think it will move farther than it already has toward being a place where diversity is valued, welcomed and seen as enormously important in making sense and being of help to families.

"Despite our relative youth, Family Social Science has an illustrious history, with a record of outstanding faculty and students."

by Harold D. Grotevant, Professor and Department Head, 1990-1995

As this issue of Interactions goes to press, we have just launched the celebration of our 25th anniversary as a department at the University of Minnesota. Despite our relative youth, Family Social Science has an illustrious history, with a record of outstanding faculty and students. Many of the articles in this issue look at our past, but what of the future?

In my view, the need for our department is stronger than ever. Newspapers and magazines regularly comment on the state of the American family and the important role of the family in preventing and solving our many social problems. There is no shortage of opinions about what the family "should" be or do, but our department’s unique role is to provide research evidence to inform this stormy public debate. We embrace this challenge wholeheartedly and look forward to contributing for many more 25-year increments.

However, we pursue our mission within a rapidly changing context. Resources for higher education are tighter than in recent memory, both from traditional state sources and from federal and foundation granting agencies. Most professionals agree on the necessity for more interdisciplinary work, but such need occurs at the same time as base disciplines are struggling for survival. The impact of massive change in mental health care delivery is yet to be fully felt. Collaborations, while absolutely essential to addressing societal needs, are fragile in this uncertain climate.

The University of Minnesota, blessed with many talented faculty and students committed to understanding family issues, can play a leadership role in showing how a large institution can transcend political and financial issues in the service of accomplishing a larger goal. We n Family Social Science look forward to being part of that solution. We hope that each of you celebrates with us and joins in renewing our commitment to education, research, and outreach on behalf of families and improving the human condition.

Hal Grotevant, Paul Rosenblatt, and FSOS graduate Rick Bell at the 25th Anniversary Celebration.
Neubeck brought to FSoS his knowledge and expertise of marriage counseling and human sexuality. Neubeck remembers that at the time he formulated his ideas about a human sexuality course, he could not find one major course on sexuality in the country. Look Magazine, which interviewed Neubeck about his novel sexuality courses, produced an article entitled, "Sex Goes to College." In the article, it talked about Neubeck's unusual style of "breaking the ice" with his students who, while enrolled in Neubeck's sexuality courses, were asked to repeat sexual terms after him during class sessions.

Even though he could see that family studies were going to be important in the future, at the time that Neubeck entered FSoS in 1971, he states, "It was hard to predict whether or not FSoS would grow because of the competition for dollars at the University." Another concern on the time was that the family field had little amount of literature to prove to other professions that it was solid. One area that Neubeck helped to bolster FSoS was his work assessing marriages and providing counseling to prevent divorces. Other significant issues in the family field at that time included mate selection, dating and courtship, and premarital intercourse.

Since 1970, Neubeck believes the family field has changed by it being much more accepted in academia; the expansion of analysis from marital dyads to families; and that local and national family organizations have become more powerful.

With regard to the vision of the family field 25 years from 1994, Neubeck believes that the national attention to values "will keep the family field on the forefront and will not regress." As "family" evolves into more and more esoteric forms, new definitions will be established and thus, Neubeck believes, "family policy will become a more important part of the overall national policy." These new directions, according to Neubeck, will force people to be more tolerant and accepting of different family forms, as well as increase the number of research opportunities for scholars devoted to the study of family phenomena.

What Neubeck misses most from FSoS is the contact with undergraduate students. He says, "It was a high for me to see what the current attitudes were." Dr. Neubeck hopes that FSoS students will find the field attractive and continue to stay in touch with families by trying to see the world from their perspectives. 

"It is well known that Minnesota's graduated family scholars’ leadership has shaped the landscape of family science in the 20th Century."

by Hamilton I. McCubbin, FSoS Chair and Head, 1978-1984

The Department of Family Social Science is best viewed as an academic program swept up in a self directed and continuous process of improvement, guided by a dedicated and committed faculty. The foundation of this premier program was deeply rooted in the fabric and history of the University of Minnesota's commitment to families and its outstanding history of scholarship in family studies. It is well known that Minnesota's graduated family scholars' leadership has shaped the landscape of family science in the 20th Century.

During the seven year period of my tenure as Chair and Head, faculty scholarship and focus became the driving force in carving out the role that FSoS would play in the future of family studies. Faculty scholarship created the (inter) national image that Minnesota was a reference point and magnet for advances in assessment and measurement of family functioning, family economics and resource management, the integration of two missions - Extension and Research faculty and programs, family stress and coping, farm families, qualitative research, boundary ambiguity, families over the life cycle, and family policy and impact analysis.

The commitment of the Agricultural Experiment Station and its leaders to advancing the applied mission of FSoS was accompanied by an unprecedented number of sizable and long term grants. In this context, it was a natural evolution that the preparation of family therapists would emerge as a new and vital core of the Department and its program. I was pleased to join Dean Keith McFarland, whose vision of a Family Social Science Department led to its creation, and stand at the doorway of the newly built McNeal Hall to welcome the faculty into its new home. Ultimately, I wanted to recognize the faculty for their leadership and scholarship which was recognized in 1985 with the Department's national ranking as the finest in the United States. 

Gerhard Neubeck, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus of FSoS

An interview with Gerry Neubeck,
Professor Emeritus of FSoS

[In 1971], "It was hard to predict whether or not FSoS would grow because of the competition for dollars at the University."
Impact Research!

"The education... will help those parents who have negative attitudes about and/or who lack information or confidence on teaching their children about managing money."

Sharon Danes, Ph.D.

Behind Dr. Sharon Danes' current research which evaluates Parental Perceptions of Children's Financial Socialization was her desire and hope that the findings would help broaden the current literature on this topic and impact families in the heart of this issue. Her research specifically focused on, "What do parents perceive as the age of their child(ren) they feel it is appropriate or important to share selected kinds of financial information or involve them in selected financial activities?" The research was collaborative in that Dr. Kathryn Rettig developed the instrument that was used in the study.

An aspect that has not been considered in financial socialization research in the past was included as a central concept in Danes' research; and that was the influence of the family of origin on the parents. Danes believes that each parent's family history is carried with him or her when it comes to the (lack of) financial socialization of his or her child(ren).

From the findings, most parents believed that children less than eight years of age were ready to receive an allowance (70%) and open their savings account (64%). Additionally, about one-third of the parents surveyed stated that 9 to 11 year olds are capable of creating a budget and should know who the guardian is in case of the parents' deaths. An interesting finding from Danes' study has 50% of the parents believe that their children 18 years of age and older could be responsible enough to have their own credit card or apply for a personal loan, whereas less than 50% of the parents felt that the same-aged children could not file a tax return alone or make decisions about financial assets.

Because Danes believes that young children and young parents, sometimes without knowing it, learn about financial knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and practices mainly from their parents, it is her intention to inform family financial educators such that they promote parents' more purposive financial socializing of their children. The education, says Danes, will help those parents who have negative attitudes about and/or who lack information or confidence on teaching their children about managing money.

Danes' research was published in Volume 5, 1994, of Financial Counseling and Planning. She has written two Minnesota Extension Service publications for parents on this topic: "Teaching Children Money Habits for Life" (HE-FO-6116-C) and "Allowances and Alternatives" (HE-FO-6117-C). These publications are available through Distribution Center, 20 Coffey Hall, St. Paul, MN, 55108 or by calling (612) 625-8173.

Answering a Call!

Throughout his work with the Southeast Asian communities, Dr. Dan Detzner has become aware of the increasing needs of the influx of refugees who have moved from their homes in Southeast Asian countries to the foreign land of the U.S. Because of his knowledge, Dr. Detzner has now answered many people's calls by proposing and receiving money from the Graduate School ($20,000) and Institute of International Studies and Programs ($10,000) to develop a Refugee Studies Center at the "U."

According to Detzner, the Center will be interdisciplinary, joining U.S. and international students and faculty from a wide array of specialties to conduct research with these populations and share in the cause to help. Insights into the needs and experiences of these populations will be provided to social service agencies, policy forums, schools, and the families themselves. Detzner emphasizes the need for educating people who come in contact with these refugees in order to help the refugees' resettlement processes.

Even though the Center's focus will be mainly on the Southeast Asian refugee population, there will be an openness to studying other refugee populations, more than 19 million worldwide, and their experiences as they begin the resettlement process. Just maybe the new Refugee Studies Center, for which Detzner will act as Program Coordinator, will become the nucleus of many refugee centers around the nation.

Joining Dr. Detzner to help plan and implement the Refugee Center will be other FSoS faculty members Sharon Danes and Paul Rosenblatt. They will be working with other faculty from other departments at the U of MN.
New Faces

This past Fall, the FSoS family grew to include eight new graduate students, two visiting professors, a visiting instructor, and two staff persons.

Graduate Students

Sylvia Arce de Esnaola was officially admitted into Family Social Science this Fall, 1994. Sylvia comes from Honduras where she is a clinical psychologist and Director of a Women Studies Center. Besides taking many classes, Sylvia found time to present at NCFR this Fall. Her interests lie in the family violence arena and in cultural conceptions of gender.

Dianne Bartels is currently Acting Director of the University of Minnesota Center for Biomedical Ethics. She has a M.A. in psychosocial nursing from the University of Washington. Her interests are in the application of family theory to health care decision-making. She recently moved into a new home with her spouse, Raymond.

Susan Carlson brings to FSoS life experiences of traveling to many other countries and studying other disciplines (e.g. literature, theology, counseling). She is currently a full-time family therapist at Washburn Child Guidance Center and, through the ecumenical community, is committed to social justice and nonviolence.

Althea Dixon has a B.A. in Theatre from Yankton College in South Dakota. Not only does she keep busy in the department pursuing her interests of parenting and child socialization and multi-cultural families, her two daughters (ages five and three) keep her life busy outside of FSoS, as well. She currently is working with Drs. Hogan and Zimmerman.

Patrice Herrington keeps busy not only being an expert seamstress and professional cake decorator, but also being interested in the influences of stress on parent-child conflict. Her supportive family consists of her husband and their six children (ages 8 to 18 years). She has a B.S. in Child Psychology from the U of MN.

Diane Hovey, after working at the Center for Children with Chronic Illness and Disability, has generated a research interest in the factors which affect the well-being of families who have members with disabilities. Diane's family of three children (Jessica, George, and Sonia) and her husband (Tom) ensures that she will not get lonely in graduate school. Diane joins FSoS with backgrounds in housing, education, and art and design.

Seonju Jang is excited to broaden her views in family studies by looking at many different cultural perspectives of what it means to be a "family." She has undergraduate and graduate degrees in family studies from Korea, her country of origin. She is joined here in Minnesota by her husband who is also in graduate school at the U of MN.

Blong Xiong's determination is to strengthen his interests in cross-cultural parent-child relations and delinquency from a family perspective. Blong earned his bachelor degree in psychology in 1991. Since then, he has been involved in the Minnesota Extension Service and the Dakota Alliance for Prevention. Blong is married, and in his spare time, dearly enjoys his nineteen month old daughter, his extended family, and playing soccer and volleyball.

Faculty

Lynne Brown is an Extension Specialist in Nutrition from Penn State and will be with the FSoS family for the 1994-95 school year. Her interests lie in family decision-making and food choices.

Gretchen Wrobel joins FSoS from Bethel College in St. Paul where she is an Associate Professor of psychology. Gretchen will be spending much of her time working with the Minnesota/Texas Adoption Research Project.

Anu Sharma is instructing the Family Research Methodology sequence during 1994-95. She comes to FSoS from Search Institute where she is a research scientist.

Staff

Katy Hallen is an undergraduate student in FSoS working with Patti Combs as an Accounts Assistant.

John Hubbard works in the main FSoS office helping with general office duties.

New Students (L-R): Seonju Jang, Diane Hovey, Althea Dixon, Dianne Bartels, Susan Carlson, Blong Xiong, Sylvia Arce de Esnaola, Patricia Herrington.
Congratulations!

Many FSOS administrative staff, graduate students, and faculty were recipients of awards this past year. We congratulate them and their achievements.

Faculty

Jean Bauer was the recipient of the Director’s Award to Distinguished Extension Faculty from the Minnesota Extension Service. She will receive a $1000 stipend.

Dan Detzner received $30,000 to develop and maintain a Refugee Studies Center within the Institute of International Studies and Programs. [See separate article]. Dan will act as Director of the Center. Dan also received the Outstanding Faculty Award for 1994 from the CHE.

William Doherty, along with Debbie Simmons, were awarded $36,302 from AAMFT to study the clinical practice of over 1700 marriage and family therapists and 5000 of their clients from 15 states.

Hal Grotevant has been selected President of the Board of Directors for Adoptive Families of America for 1994-95.

Jim Maddock is a member of an interdisciplinary team that has received $20,000 from the Graduate School to research “Violence Prevention and Control Initiative.”

David Olson received the 1994 Cumulative Contribution to Marriage and Family Therapy Research Award at the Annual Conference of AAMFT this Fall in Chicago.

Students

Bill Allen received a graduate school tuition fellowship for Fall Quarter, 1994.

Walter Bera and Kate Lally were the recipients of NCFR awards worth $200 from the Education and Enrichment and the Family Therapy Sections, respectively.

Jennifer Wing and Lori Kaplan were recipients of the 1994 Neubeck Awards. Jennifer presented at NCFR and Lori presented at AAMFT in Chicago.
News Briefs

Pauline Boss was a member of a panel with seven other women who were representing Russia, Poland, Italy, India, Switzerland, Japan, and the U.S. at the Hope Conference this past summer. The conference was sponsored by the United Nations. Dr. Boss has also been appointed to the University’s Sexual Harassment Board.

Philip Colgan and Bill Allen were a part of the MCFR program.

"Families and Violence: Promising Interventions for Prevention," at the Earle Brown Continuing Education Center in December.

Hal Grotevant spent time this summer in Norway participating in workshops and conferences. Additionally, with three Dutch colleagues, Hal co-edited, Identity and Development: An Interdisciplinary Approach (Sage, 1994).

Jan Hogan presented a workshop this past Fall at the Girl Scout Forum; the talk was entitled, “Role of the Family in Girl Development.”

Jim Maddock will be giving a keynote address at The Society for the Scientific Study of Sex, 1995 Miccontinent Region Annual Conference; it is entitled, “Educating about Sexuality.” Jim will also be editing a special issue of the Journal of Psychology and Sexuality on the same topic.

The Third Annual Research Symposium on Child and Family Issues will be held April 27-29, 1995 on the St. Paul campus of the U of MN. This year it is being hosted by FSOS graduate students and faculty. The format of the Symposium is informal and thus, allows graduate students to present papers in progress, dissertation/thesis proposals, and finished research projects. The Symposium brings together faculty and graduate students from North Dakota State University, the University of Manitoba, and the University of Minnesota. Contact Jennifer Wragg at (612) 625-1900 if interested in presenting and/or helping out with hosting this important event.

The St. Paul Metropolitan Boys Choir at the 25th Anniversary Celebration.

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