Stories of Ambiguous Loss

The concept originated from Boss' work with families of pilots declared missing in action during the Vietnam War and with families having a member suffering from Alzheimer's disease. These represent two types of ambiguous loss, when someone is physically absent but psychologically present, or when a person is physically present but psychologically absent.

Pauline Boss', new book, published by Harvard University Press, is receiving much critical acclaim. The culmination of years of research and therapy practice, it contains compassionate and insightful stories of families coping with ambiguous loss.

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Key Staff Changes

Kathy Witherow, who has helped countless graduate students and adjunct faculty with their appointments, has moved to the Dean's office, while Sheri Carlson landed in her spot in April.

Witherow Promoted

Kathy Witherow was named Associate to the Dean, College of Human Ecology, effective February 22, 1999. She has 18 years experience at the U of M, and for the past 11 years served as Assistant to the Department Head and Associate Administrator in Family Social Science. Witherow's knowledge and expertise make her exceptionally qualified to join the college administrative leadership

Immigration, divorce, adoption, and relocation are other situations of ambiguous loss that can lead to depression, anxiety, and conflicts among family members. Problems occur when family members deny the reality of the situation. Boss' own approach in family therapy is to encourage family members to talk together about how to mourn that which is lost and also how to celebrate that which remains.
Dear Friends:

I am pleased to announce that Dr. Martha Rueter will join our faculty this fall. Currently, she is Project Director of “Critical Transitions in Rural Families at Risk,” at the Center for Family Research in Rural Mental Health at Iowa State University. She is Director of a longitudinal study of the challenges faced by more than 500 rural Iowa families. You may have read the publications she has co-authored in the Journal of Marriage and Family, Family Relations and Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. She will be teaching in the area of family policy. As part of her graduate program, she was a legislative intern and a family policy intern in the Division of Children, Youth and Families at the Iowa Department of Human Rights.

This faculty position was made available from our Minnesota legislature to enable us to focus more research projects on rural families. We are impressed with Dr. Rueter’s research experience. Since completing her Ph.D. degree eight years ago, she has worked with Dr. Rand Conger, Center Director, and colleagues at ISU on rural family research. As an added bonus, she is a native Minnesota scholar returning “home.”

Our faculty are looking forward to beginning the new U of M semester system in September. Our curriculum has been revised with fewer courses and greater depth, 15-week terms instead of 10-week terms. We will also have a 3-week term in May that includes special topic courses such as “grief and families” and “marriage and couples education.” Most of the faculty have either taught and/or have been a student on the semester system and are ready for the change.

For: additional news about faculty, staff, and students, please check our Web site:

[http://fsos.che.umn.edu]

We keep up-to-date information about courses, research findings, publications, and upcoming events for you on the Web. As always, we welcome your ideas and opinions about all of our programs.

Sincerely,

Jar. Hogan

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**New Course: Alcohol and Drugs, Families and Culture**

Two new courses will be offered as part of the FSOS Alcohol and Drug Counseling Education Program (ADCEP):

- **FSOS 3426, Alcohol and Drugs, Families and Culture**, a 3-credit course, taught by Dr. Philip Colgan, examines the effects of gender, ethnicity, social class, sexuality, sexual orientation, and disabilities on the use and misuse of alcohol and other substances.

- **FSOS 3427, Alcohol, Drugs, and the Brain**, a 1-credit web-enhanced course taught by Dr. Peter Dimock.
New Course: Intimate Relations

Intimate Relations, FSoS 1101, a 3-credit liberal education course, will be offered for the first time in the fall 1999 under the new 15-week semester system. This freshman level course provides the meeting ground for graduate and undergraduate education where graduate students will be teaching interns under the guidance of Dr. Wayne Caron, instructor.

The new course covers the nature and the diversity of intimate relations. In recent decades, there have been dramatic changes in the structure of intimate relationships. Gender roles have been transforming. Marriage has been influenced by high rates of divorce and cohabitation. Conventional views have been challenged by an improved awareness of relationship diversity, reflecting culture, class, and sexual orientation.

Within this context of change and transformation, Intimate Relations gives students the tools for reflection and critical thinking about relationships. The course examines the role of attraction in the dating and courtship process. It explores the varieties of intimacy, illustrating the theoretical and empirical work that has contributed to our understanding of love. It examines the nature of commitment in relationships, focusing on the qualities that make relationships strong. It also looks at the dark side of relationships, addressing issues of abuse, infidelity, and relationship dissolution.

A special feature of the course is the involvement of graduate students from the Family Social Science teaching internship program. These instructors in training will work with undergraduate students in small sections. This format provides the opportunity for in-depth exploration of the issues and ideas that are presented in the large group lectures. Students will get a comprehensive review of the theory and research on intimate relations in modern life, complemented by group discussions and exercises to help them find the meaning and relevance of this information in their personal lives.

Now on the Web: Faculty Research Interests

Our faculty is currently involved in a wide range of research and outreach activities. Two faculty members, Dr. Paul Rosenblatt and Dr. William Doherty, have updated their web pages to feature current projects including:

- Farm and Business Families, Rosenblatt's exploration of issues in families who have entered sustainable agriculture.
- Grief in Families, Rosenblatt's qualitative study of couples who have experienced the death of a child.
- Professional/Family/Community Partnerships, Doherty's new project based on the "public work" model of the Center for Democracy and Citizenship at the Humphrey Center for Public Affairs.
- Transition to Fatherhood, Doherty's pilot study of a couples intervention for first-time fathers and mothers. Soon to start, its goals are to increase father involvement, promote father-mother collaboration, and reduce parental stress during the transition to fatherhood.

Check the Research page of the FSoS web site periodically for new project updates [http://fsos.che.umn.edu/research/].

Carolyn Tubbs Accepts Research Fellowship

Dr. Carolyn Tubbs has accepted a 3-year research fellowship, effective June 1, 1999, with the Family Research Consortium III, funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. She will relocate for two years to the Chicago area, then complete the third year at the U of M when she resumes teaching in the fall 2001. Professor Robin Jarrett, University of Illinois, Urbana/Champaign, is her faculty mentor. Professor Linda Burton, Penn State is in charge of the NIMH post-doctoral training grant.

"I will be working with two nationally-renowned ethnographers on a multi-site study of ethnically-diverse families transitioning from welfare to work," Tubbs said, "The opportunity to be part of the Consortium and work with its prestigious faculty is indeed a rare privilege."

The Consortium provides training for research on family processes and child/adolescent mental health in culturally and socioeconomically diverse populations. The training is multidisciplinary in content and emphasizes multiple levels of investigation from the biological correlates of individual adjustment to the social context of family functioning.

A description of the Consortium's research activities is available at its web site [http://www.jhu.edu/~welfare/].
Undergraduate Students, the “Very Best”

Four undergraduates have been recognized for their academic achievement and excellent community service:

- Jennifer Molina Balbuena is the recipient of the U of M’s 1999 President’s Student Leadership and Service Award. She also was nominated for the CHE Centennial Recognition Award, the Dean E.M. Freeman Medal, and the Natalie S. Gallagher Award.

- Chris Hoefer is a recipient of the 1999 Student Involvement Award.

- Michael Van Nathe is the CHE Undergraduate Student of the Year. He was also nominated for the Dean E.M. Freeman Medal and the Natalie S. Gallagher Award.

- Donna Marie Ray is a recipient of a 1999 Student Involvement Award.

They have been honored for simply doing what they care most about in the world. In the words of Dr. William Goodman, coordinator of undergraduate education:

“These students represent the department’s very best undergraduates. I am immensely proud of each of these students. The awards signify their mastery of knowledge and their ability to critically think about knowledge. Further, their thinking skills have been advanced by their individual responses to the challenge of participatory learning. They possess an understanding that is gained only when students actively engage in opportunities for cooperation between the university and world community.

“I am inspired by their dedication to accomplish their goals. They enliven my dreams for a more humane and peaceful world. These extraordinary students, by their diligent work, awaken and motivate their peers to their own, often latent, abilities and greatness.”

One of her greatest strengths lies in fostering diverse perspectives and experiences. She has organized activities around the issues of farmworker rights, prisoner rights, police brutality, sexual harassment, domestic violence, low-intensity warfare, Cuba solidarity, gay rights, Latina lesbianism and racism awareness, and colonization and imperialism. As a student representative to the Board of Regents, she has voiced the concerns of diverse populations.

Jennifer also has been studying abroad every summer. Upon return from her most recent internship at the South Asia Human Rights Documentation Centre in New Delhi, she gave a public presentation on “Conflict, human rights, and international displacement in India.” This was not only informative but also encouraging to other students who might participate in international study.

Jennifer strives to make the democratic process more accessible to all people so that they may better represent themselves, their families, and their communities. She has been a valuable link between grassroots community organizations and leadership and governance bodies.

Chris Hoefer

Jennifer has dedicated herself to motivating students to become politically involved. She has encouraged students to participate in campus debates, elections, rallies, forums, and cultural events. As a role model, she has taught others to become leaders by informing them how to organize activities and interact with decision makers to effect social change.

Chris has played an instrumental role in the Sexual Health Awareness and Disease Education Program and in the U of M
Youth and AIDS projects. Chris has achieved a goal that faculty desire of all our undergraduate students: ongoing, concurrent involvement in both the academic and "real world" settings.

Chris has demonstrated that education must extend beyond the classroom. As coordinator of the Sexual Health Awareness and Disease Education Program, he organized educational presentations and various speakers for residence halls, Greek houses, and community venues.

As a field outreach worker for the University of Minnesota Youth and AIDS projects, Chris participated in outreach and education in bars, coffee-houses, and greater Minnesota locations. Chris contacted and interviewed research participants for HIV prevention research. In addition, he assisted with grant writing, web site maintenance, project proposals, and cultural diversity training.

Chris has an ability to move flexibly between environments and a talent for connecting with people from diverse backgrounds. At the U of M, he worked with a broad and diverse student body, whereas as a Youth and AIDS project outreach worker he focused on the specific population of young gay men. Chris' involvement in these projects has provided a burst of energy that has revitalized them.

Michael Van Nathe

Michael has made significant professional contributions through active community participation, showing leadership by his involvement in HIV prevention and intervention. He has enrolled young gay and bisexual men into HIV prevention and research programs, and he has facilitated groups on safer sex and HIV prevention. He has done an excellent job empowering people to make decisions that are right for them.

Because of his interest working with homeless and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth, Michael extended his academic learning by acquiring and applying advanced crisis intervention skills. He was proactive in tailoring his education at the U of M, combining courses in Family Social Science with hands-on street experience working in various capacities.

Michael deals with sensitive and complex issues. He is able to work at the individual, family, and societal levels in addition to interconnecting them as a holistic system. In doing so, he has become an important contributor to the helping profession.

Donna Marie Ray

Michael Van Nathe, CHE Undergraduate Student of the Year

Through Donna's own success, she has empowered other students to express themselves and attempt new challenges. She was elected president of the FSOS RoundTable this past year. The activities she organized built a critical link between the University and the surrounding community.

For instance, Donna organized a Sledathon to raise money to donate to the People Serving People homeless shelter under construction. She also invited a representative of the CHE Career Services Center to speak to students about how to use its resources to explore careers, learn resume writing and job interviewing skills, and find internships.

Donna also has served as vice president of the Student Distance Education Organization, advocating the benefits of distance education for students with disabilities and visual impairments. She actively promotes the U of M for its accessibility, advanced technology, and support of students academically and professionally.

Moreover, Donna's personal experience with Disability Services at the U of M have helped her connect visually impaired students with resources for academic success. This is a familiar role for her, having worked as a volunteer at Vision Loss Resources, motivating clients to set goals for educational options.

Donna is a strong, involved leader both at the University and in the community at large. She has taken risks and succeeded in reaching goals that she at first thought were unattainable.
Paul Rosenblatt signed a contract with Brunner/Mazel Publishing Company to publish: "Parent Grief: Narratives of Loss and Relationship."

Shirley Zimmerman was awarded the 1998-99 Hellen LeBaron Hilton Chair in Family Policy, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, Iowa State University.


Susan Jack received a Twin City Home and Community Scholarship, $1,500.

Master's theses were successfully defended by:
• Julie Kohler for "Adopted Adolescents' Preoccupation with Adoption: The Impact on Adoptive Family Dynamics."
• Mindy Nakamoto for "Gender Differences in the Relation Between Adolescents' Sexual Knowledge and Adolescents' Perception of Parents' Attitudes Toward Sexuality Issues."

Hee-Kyung Kwon received a Dora A. Waller International Award for 1999-2000 for her study, "Perceived Economic Siation, Stress and Family Outcomes in Korean Couples in Seoul, Korea."

Carey Wexler Sherman is co-editor of VIEWS, a publication of the Minnesota Council on Family Relations. An article by Beth Maddock Magstad, "Choosing Child Care," appears in the spring 1999 issue.

Hal Grotevant nearly $2 million for his research on Adoption and Adolescent Well Being, in collaboration with Brent Miller, Utah State University. Hal traveled to Norway in early May to speak about his research. He spent three days lecturing at the University of Tromso, the northernmost university in the world—above the Arctic Circle, and he was a keynote speaker at an international conference in Oslo.

The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development awarded Hal Grotevant nearly $2 million for his research on Adoption and Adolescent Well Being, in collaboration with Brent Miller, Utah State University. Hal traveled to Norway in early May to speak about his research. He spent three days lecturing at the University of Tromso, the northernmost university in the world—above the Arctic Circle, and he was a keynote speaker at an international conference in Oslo.

The Ph.D. degree was awarded to:
• Lynn Heitritter, for "Meanings of Family Strength Voiced by Somali Immigrants: Reaching an Inductive Understanding."
• Nicole Marie Ross, for "Construct Validity of the Global Assessment of Relational Functioning (GARF): A Health Services Research Approach with a Sample of Community Based Clinicians."

Amy Lash Esau, Joe Reid, and Poonsuk Wachwathan passed their preliminary oral exams. Raksha Gates, Blong Xiong, and Dianne Bartels passed their written preliminary exams.

Blong Xiong was awarded the McFarland Assistantship for 1999-2000. It is a 50% assistantship that will allow him to focus on his dissertation research.


Dora A. Waller International Awards for 1999-2000 went to:
• Kari Hanstad, for a Human Sexuality study tour in Amsterdam, London, and Sweden;
• Kirsten Thompson, for Global Campus Study Abroad in London, England.

Anna Galperin received a Twin City Home and Community scholarship.

Ruth Koran received the $2,000 Carol E. Macpherson Memorial Scholarship for 1999-2000, offered through the University of Minnesota Women's Center.

College of Human Ecology scholarships ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 were awarded for the 1999-2000 academic year to Carrie Cannon, Mary Fingerholz, Tianna Hoppe, Hillary Mercer,
Rebecca Klein, Ruth Koran, Brett Strangstalien, and Terah Venzant.

Professional Experience Grants were awarded to support internships for Ruth Koran at Coon Rapids High School; Ann McCabe at the Washburn Child Guidance Center; and Julie Neitzel at The Bridge for Runaway Youth. Grants also went to Vanessa Sovine and Kathleen Egan.

Sara Testen is a co-coordinator of Fresh Force, a group of students who visit middle schools and community centers to organize community service activities.

Terah Venzant was accepted into the 1999 Summer Minority Scholar Development Program.

Shelby Wentworth and Kristyn Hart-Wertepey, both CHE student ambassadors received the 1999 Campus Involvement Award. Shelby also received the Dean E. M. Freeman Certificate for Outstanding Contribution to Student Life.

Alumni career advancement


Deb Fravel (Ph.D., 1995) has been recognized as a Master Teacher through the 1999 Teaching Excellence Recognition Award at Indiana University.

Ronit Leichtentritt (Ph.D., 1998) has received the Alon scholarship, Israel's most prestigious honor for new researchers. It contributes $9,000 for her research and funds her salary at Tel-Aviv University for the next three years.

Farrell Webb (Ph.D., 1994), Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, Kansas State University, was awarded "Outstanding Teacher of the Year" with a stipend presented to him by Commerce Bank of Manhattan.

Diane Hovey (Ph.D., 1998) was chosen for a 2-year non-residential postdoctoral fellowship with the Beach Center at the University of Kansas, Lawrence, to work on family and disability policy.

Judy I. Rommel (Ph.D., 1989), Professor, has been named the Outstanding Teacher for the College of Human Development at University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

The following CSOS alumni were elected to NCFC offices:
- Volker Thomas (Ph.D. 1990), Family Therapy Nominating Committee
- Dale Hawley, (Ph.D., 1991), Chair, Religion & Family Life Section

Alumni Profile: Celvia Dixon

Dr. Celvia Dixon, CFCS, finds it hard to believe that seven years have passed since she earned her Ph.D. in Family Social Science. She has accomplished so much in such little time. When you read her story, you'll see how time flies if you're having fun!

In her own words:

"Family Social Science truly prepared me for an exciting and successful professional life. After graduation in December 1992, I narrowed my career search to six universities. I had six interviews and received six offers. My education and experiences equipped me with a unique edge to negotiate a higher entrance salary and title. I accepted an Associate Professor/Family Economics Extension Specialist position with the University of Tennessee.

"The position was truly everything I thought it would be and more. I worked with wonderful people and had many wonderful opportunities. In less than five years, I earned tenure. I wrote grants and received funding totaling over 2 million dollars. I developed and implemented statewide programs and materials, presented at professional association meetings, and received state and national recognition. I published in professional journals. I attended and conducted training sessions throughout the United States and in Canada, and I developed program teams and partners.

"Last year in an effort to spend more time with my husband, Tiki, and our teenage daughter, Charla, I resigned from my full-time position and became an adjunct professor at the University. This decision also gave me time to focus on a lifelong dream I had to start a consulting business. My consulting and training business, CD Enterprises—Famfocus$, provides solutions for issues that affect family finances.

"I will forever remember my Minnesota experiences. My advice to all graduate students: Set goals and stay focused on them. Cherish the good experiences and grow from those that are not so good. And always remember your success in life will depend on you!"

Celvia invites replies and can be reached by email at familyfocus@aol.com.
Thank You!
Our generous donors during the past year:

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