



FEMINISM AND FAMILY STUDIES 2017 SPRING NEWSLETTER

KEEPING FEMINIST FAMILY SCHOLARS INFORMED AND CONNECTED

THOUGHTS FROM THE CHAIR

Spring 2017

Hi Everyone! At the time of writing this, I am in the midst of linking a record number of section conference submissions (N=45) with an outstanding field of section reviewers. In total, there were 844 submissions to NCFR this year, up from our previous record of 707 in 2016! Thank you from the bottom and top of my heart for all the work you've put into your submissions and the work you are about to do, to give each proposal reflective review.

Spring is a busy time for our section's submission foci: conference proposals, Jessie Bernard paper and proposal award applications, and the Alexis J. Walker award (2017 is the Mid-Career award). This means we have a substantial number of folks working on documents to submit and we need to solicit a strong review corps to turn around these items in a timely manner.

We will have some new-in-this-context submissions to review for the 2017 conference: Praxis Roundtables and Professional Development Exchanges. The roundtables and exchanges will be held during our Section meeting. This is new this year, so please let us know your experiences from submission to presentation to help us evaluate this avenue of presentation and use of time.

In keeping with seeking feedback from our members, if you have questions you would like to see in the annual Section Information Gathering Survey, please forward them to me. A first draft of this survey will be ready at the end of April, but I am able to make additions and edits. Typically, this survey includes the minutes from the last section meeting, any proposed edits to by-laws, and nominations for open positions at the National and Section levels. Additional questions are added at the interest and discretion of the section, so your input is needed!

In closing, I would like to share a few things I've learned over my first year as Chair. First, conference planning is an amazing process. Holding a planning meeting at the conference, followed by two 1-hour conference calls with 20+ people and getting lists of things done and/or delegated to email, and finally a 1.5-day retreat with follow up email is a testimony to collective good will and intentions paired with successful strategies for time-management. Second, the elections processes at National and Section levels baffled me and was more stressful than it really needed to be. A few key points to keep in mind for our Section and lessons I learned along the way:

- (1) All section members who are nominated need to have been members of the section for 2 years before running for a position in order to be eligible.
- (2) If you nominate someone through the Information Gathering Survey, please take time to check with that person beforehand so that they can affirmatively consent to or decline the nomination!
- (3) Members can run for only one position at a time. If one agrees to run for a National position, one cannot also run for a Section position.

Thank you all for making the Feminism and Family Studies Section a vibrant and amazing community. Thank you for being willing to engage in difficult conversations; support scholars, practitioners, and families; and create a space for loving-kindness in a world that is too often hostile.

Tara Saathoff-Wells

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Thoughts from the Chair
- 2-3 Jessie Bernard Awards
- 4 Alexis Walker Award
- 5 Sexuality Focus Group Update

JESSIE BERNARD AWARDS

Winners of the 2016 Jessie Bernard Awards

2016 Jessie Bernard Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship Paper Award – Jennifer Randles

Randles, J. (2016). Redefining the marital power struggle through relationship skills: How United States marriage education programs challenge and reinforce gender inequality. *Gender & Society*, 30, 240-264.



Since 2002, federal and state governments in the United States have spent over \$1 billion on marriage and relationship education programs. To understand how these programs teach about gender, communication, and power within marriage, Randles analyzed twenty curricula approved for use in healthy marriage programs and participated in a training session, workshop, or class for eighteen of these same curricula. She found that some programs assumed men and women are fundamentally different in how they think, feel, and communicate, and recommended that couples use relationship skills to overcome these differences. Other programs, however, taught couples to question these essentialist beliefs and to avoid gender stereotypes in expectations of how their spouses should think and act. By focusing on fairness, equality, and shared power, Randles found that many of the curricula provided limited tools for challenging gender difference and power within marriage by teaching couples strategies that privilege individual abilities, inclinations, and availability regardless of gender.

Nevertheless, the strategies for verbal negotiation taught by these programs did not address how gender inequalities—such as women’s overall lower pay—often create a power imbalance between husbands and wives tilted in favor of men, even when couples share egalitarian gender views. Gendered power exists in the broader society through unequal opportunities for women and men—or what sociologists call institutionalized gender inequalities—not just between two people in a couple. Randles therefore argues that government-sponsored marriage and relationship education programs have contradictory implications for promoting greater gender equality. They encourage couples to question how narrow ideas of gender “roles” shape marital conflict and unhappiness. Yet, they teach that gender is a set of individual inclinations to be discussed and negotiated rather than a relationship of power connected to larger systems of inequality and state action.

As a case of what Randles calls *interpersonal gender interventions*, healthy marriage programs focus on teaching individuals that gender equality primarily lies in developing and negotiating more egalitarian gender attitudes. Yet, she ultimately argues, interventions that promote ideas about equality will have limited utility if individuals learn to develop more egalitarian beliefs in the absence of institutional changes that enable them to act on these values. Policies need to do more than help couples negotiate differences using relationship skills. They must promote equitable access to education, employment, and stable earnings that allow partners to create fair, safe, and loving relationships. Only then will partners have truly equal power to express, pursue, and achieve their interests within marriage and family relationships.

2016 Jessie Bernard Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective Award – Shawn Mendez

Shawn N. Mendez is a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, working with Dr. Ramona Faith Oswald. She is a member of the planning committee for the annual LGBTQ Research Symposium in Champaign, IL, and an instructor in the Department of Human Development & Family Studies. Her teaching is guided by a commitment to social justice, and accessible, student-centered learning environments. Her research program focuses on the ways that race, sexuality, gender, and class are interrelated, negotiated, and context dependent. Her current dissertation project focuses on the processes of racial and queer socialization in mixed race LGQ parent families and LGQ parent families of color. In August of this year, she will join the faculty at the University of North Carolina Asheville as an Assistant Professor of Sociology.

Applications for the 2017 Jessie Bernard Awards

Jessie Bernard Outstanding Contribution to Feminist Scholarship Paper Award

(<https://www.ncfr.org/awards/section-awards/feminism-family-studies/jessie-bernard-contribution-feminist-scholarship-paper>)

This award recognizes a graduate student or new professional (individuals with up to five years of post-doctoral work) who has published or is about to publish a paper using feminist frameworks and methodologies in research. Nominees 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. Submissions should include:

- Cover letter
- Abstract (no more than 150 words)
- Manuscript (may not exceed 35 manuscript pages).

Any identifying information should be removed from the abstract and manuscript.

Jessie Bernard Outstanding Research Proposal from a Feminist Perspective Award

(<https://www.ncfr.org/awards/section-awards/feminism-family-studies/jessie-bernard-outstanding-research-proposal-feminist->)

This award recognizes a graduate student or new professional (up to five years post-doctoral work) who has demonstrated excellence in research and potential contribution to feminist scholarship. Proposals will be reviewed for their potential contribution to feminist scholarship about families and the use of feminist frameworks and methods. Submissions should include:

- Cover letter
- Abstract (100 words or fewer)
- Five-page double-spaced proposal (point 12 font) which outlines the project's purpose, theoretical foundation, research methods, and potential contribution to feminist scholar
- Reference list
- Budget (half-page).

Any identifying information should be removed from the materials except for the cover letter.

Deadline to Apply is April 15, 2017.

All materials should be submitted to jbawards2017@gmail.com.

Award winners will be notified by July 31, 2017.

Alexis J. Walker Award

for Mid-Career Achievement in Feminist Family Studies 2017

NCFR Feminism and Family Studies Section

Call for Nominations

The Feminism and Family Studies Section, of the National Council on Family Relations, is pleased to announce the call for nominations for the 2017 **Alexis J. Walker Award for Mid-Career Achievement in Feminist Family Studies**. This award, given biannually, recognizes a mid-career scholar who exemplifies excellence in contributions to feminist scholarship in research, teaching, leadership and administration, activism, and service to NCFR and the section. This award is given in honor of Alexis J. Walker, founder of the NCFR Feminism and Family Studies (FFS) Section.



Criteria for Eligibility

The Award will recognize an outstanding Feminist in Family Studies. Award nominees should have high visibility in the FFS section and have made strong contributions to feminist family scholarship, in one or more of the following additional areas: teaching, service to FFS and NCFR, leadership and administration, and/or activism. Award nominees should be at least 10 years since completing terminal degree. Applicants and nominees must be NCFR and Feminism and Family Studies Section members to apply.

Nomination/application process

- Applicants can be nominated by colleagues or can self-nominate
- Applicants must provide 3 (but no more than 5) letters of support
- Applicants must provide a cover sheet addressing:
 - ✓ How applicant's work meets the criteria of the award
 - ✓ How long the applicant has been a FFS member
 - ✓ Description of present and past participation in FFS
 - ✓ Names of references
 - ✓ Applicant's updated vitae or resume

Deadline

- May 1: Application deadline. Send completed applications to jeannestrand@ncfr.org.
- July 31: The recipient is notified by this date.



If you have questions, please contact: Shannon Weaver, Ph.D.,
FFS Past Chair, 860-486-4684, shannon.weaver@uconn.edu

Awards Committee Members: Katherine Allen, Erin Lavender-Stott,
Margaret Mangoonian, Elizabeth Sharp, and Shannon Weaver



Sexuality Focus Group Report

Katie M. Barrow

Greetings from the Sexuality Focus Group!

I am so excited to share what has been going on with our focus group. First and foremost, I must thank Dr. Kristen Benson for serving as co-president these last six years. She is stepping down so she can chair the newly formed Social Justice Network Focus Group where I know she will feel right at home invigorating our fellow members in dialogue around social justice activism. Thus, I hope you will join me in welcoming our new co-president, Erin Lavender-Stott, a doctoral candidate from Virginia Tech. Erin has been a member of NCFR for five years, and currently serves as a Students and New Professionals representative for the Feminism and Family Studies section. A regular attendee of our annual NCFR focus group meetings, I am thrilled she will be transitioning to a leadership role within our group. I know she will be a wonderful asset for our community!

Our meeting at the 2016 NCFR Conference was a success! There was a lot of interest in how we discuss various sexuality issues with young children, specifically those in pre-K and early childhood. An often overlooked age group when it comes to discussing sexuality information, some of our attendees pointed out that as educators – and parents – they strive to understand what best practices might be not only in their communities, but in their own households. Some questions that arose: What do children of this age group want to know? What should they know? How can parents and educators feel confident in delivering knowledgeable, effective information to youth? What resources are available for parents and communities to aid in this discussion? After our meeting, Erin, myself, and one of our attendees decided to further investigate this topic. We consulted the academic literature as well as national sexuality organizations to see what we could find. We also performed general Google searches for things such as “talking with Kindergarteners about sexuality”, as it was discussed during our focus group that search engines are often viewed as safe, accessible pathways for parents trying to navigate these issues. In light of our investigation, we compiled our findings and hope to present them at this year’s NCFR Conference. If you see our paper on the program, please come see us! We would also love to have you join our focus group meeting, as well, where we will also share our findings and disseminate resources.

Last, but certainly not least, even though we meet once a year face-to-face, the fun never stops. Please feel free to join our conversations on Facebook! Search for us under “Sexuality Focus Group (NCFR)” and ask to join.

You can also chat with us via the listserv at: <https://www.ncfr.org/focusgroups/sexuality>

Katie M. Barrow

Co-President, Sexuality Focus Group

Compiled by Andrea Swenson, FFS Secretary

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