



## Youth, Aging, & the Life Course Division Spring 2005 Newsletter

### **From the Division Chair:**

I want to extend my sincerest appreciation to all of you who have been such a great help to me and to the division over the past year. I assumed the role of division chair by chance after our division lost our chair. In 2003, our division had no sessions on the program. In 2004, we had four sessions. I am ecstatic to announce that this year, we have three Division sponsored sessions and five co-sponsored sessions. Please make sure to submit a paper to one or more of these sessions. The sessions will undoubtedly prove to be interesting and timely. Information on sessions and submission procedures are included in the newsletter and on the SSSP website.

In addition, we were fortunate to have been able to award a student paper award in August of 2004. We had a number of excellent papers from which to choose a winner and the award committee selected the very deserving paper, "Under the Knife and Proud of It: An Analysis of the Normalization of Cosmetic Surgery" by Abigail Brooks from Boston College as the recipient. This year we hope to make the task of choosing a winner even more difficult for the committee by having even more submissions. If you are a student or have a student who has written an appropriate and excellent paper, please consider the Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division as a potential "home" for the paper presentation and make certain that it is submitted to the paper competition. Details are included inside this newsletter.

Finally, this is my last 8 months as division chair. Our division has recently gone through a period of struggle. I am asking each of you, as devoted members of the division to do what you can to help to build the division and make it stronger. Also, you will have a wonderful chair in Carolyn Perrucci, who will take over the reins in August at the annual meeting. I ask that you give her the same level of support that you have given me. And, also, if you have not already done so, please consider taking a more active role in the division. We always need committed members to serve as readers for the paper competition, as session organizers, and this year we need to elect a Chair-Elect. If you are interested in taking on some new roles (as if we all don't have too many already), please contact me or Carolyn. We would LOVE to hear from you.

Tracy L. Dietz, Division Chair

## In Memory

Norma Williams, Ph.D. May 5, 1946—September 11, 2004

Norma Williams was born on May 5, 1946 in Kingsville, Texas, and died from complications of host-versus-graft disease associated with bone marrow transplantation. A memorial service was held in Arlington, Texas, on September 14 and a prayer service in Kingsville, Texas, on September 16 followed by a funeral service and burial in Kingsville, Texas on September 17.

Dr. Williams received her B.S. and M.S. from Texas A&I University in 1975 and 1976 respectively and then completed her doctorate in sociology at the University of Texas at Austin in 1984.

After graduation, she accepted a position as an assistant professor at Texas A&M University, where she remained from 1984-1989. In 1989, she accepted a position at the University of North Texas where she held positions as the Vice-President for Multicultural Affairs (1995-1997) and the Director of the Center for Cultural Diversity (1995-1996). She then accepted a position at the University of Texas at Arlington where she taught until her death.

Dr. Williams authored numerous journal articles and book chapters as well as her research monograph *The Mexican American Family*. She was the recipient of many awards, including the Lee Founders Award from the Society for the Study of Social Problems (2000) and the G. Roland Vela Award from the Hispanic Friends of the University of North Texas (1997).

In addition to the other numerous committees upon which Norma Williams served, she was elected by the membership of the SSA to serve as the first Mexican American president of the organization for 1994-1995. She was a long-time member of SSSP and the Youth, Aging and the Life Course Division and served on many committees for the organization.

She was preceded in death by her father Allen Walter Williams, and her brother Russell Ben Williams. She is survived by mother Guadalupe Williams, sisters Peggy Williams (Soliz) and Laura Bernal, brothers Richard Williams and Allen Williams Jr., and numerous nieces and nephews.

### **My Recollections of Norma**

Norma Williams was one of the most important people in my life. I met Norma as a new graduate student in August, 1990. She needed a teaching assistant; I needed a job. Through the relationship that began that fall I learned a great deal about sociology, academia, and life.

It is from her that I developed true understanding of the sociological imagination and impression management. In 1995, I completed my dissertation under her direction and moved off to start my own academic career. Through the years, Norma guided

me through my master's degree, my doctorate, a post-doctoral fellowship, getting a job, and the tenure process and even served as the occasional marriage and family counselor, which will be humorous to those who knew her. I could always count on her, not only to be there, but to give me an honest answer and thoughtful advice. She never just told me what I wanted to hear. Even when it was difficult, she was straightforward and honest with me – always. And, she would challenge me to re-evaluate my perspective of the world.

Norma taught me a lot about sociology and academia but what she taught me about life is just as significant. Norma taught me to be an independent, strong woman. While this was a lesson that I learned from my first encounters with Norma, the way that she confronted the multiple myeloma with which she was diagnosed in 1998 was particularly courageous. Even as she was battling this horrific disease, Norma continued to be a sociologist. She continued to write, she continued to teach, and she continued to mentor and support her students regardless of what was happening in her life. Just a month before her death, she sent to me a copy of a paper that she had written for presentation at the 2004 annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. She had been in the hospital and was unable to attend the meeting and present it herself, but she had made a commitment and was determined to make sure that she met that commitment.

From her, I learned the value of being true to yourself, your family, and friends. There was nothing that Norma would not do for those who were special in her life. Her family was immensely important to her and she would have done anything for them. While her brother was battling and finally succumbed to cancer, she was right there by his side. I know that she had ultimate respect for her mother and I considered it a compliment when she took me to Kingsville to meet her mother and see the town in which she was raised.

She was also devoted to her friends and was one of the best at maintaining contact with her friends. She was never too busy to keep in touch. This does not mean that she had good timing, however. There were times that Norma would call at odd hours of the night or would leave very lengthy voice mail messages on my answering machine, often to make sure that I had done something as she had suggested or to give me advice.

No matter what, Norma always thought of those in need. One of the last times that I spoke to her was just as Hurricane Frances had begun pounding my community. The telephone rang. Norma had been admitted into the hospital and told me she was watching the news and had become worried about us. It was obvious that she was weak, but at that moment she was more concerned about me.

Finally, Norma taught me that life should be fun and that a good sense of humor is essential. She always took time out to have a little fun. She always took time to relax and enjoy herself. She had a wonderful, sometimes devious and often sarcastic sense of humor. She taught me to work hard, but to take time to smell the roses as well. I feel like I could never express the gratitude that I have for all that Norma did for me over the past 14 years. I also cannot begin to express just how much Norma has meant to me nor the significant impact that she had on me as I became a sociologist and a mentor to my own students. I will forever be indebted to

her for all the lessons and support over the years. SSA and sociology has lost one of our most dedicated members. Now, more than ever, I feel like I understand the core of one of her favorite expressions, "Onward through the fog."

---- Tracy Dietz

### **Dr. J. Michael Cruz Remembers Norma**

I'm sure everyone has a story about Norma. She was ubiquitous in terms of her association involvement, her mentoring, and her ties to the university that was lucky enough to have her.

I met Norma in the Spring of 1994 when I started graduate school. She quickly became confused about whether my name was Joe or Michael and why, if it was Joe, I went by Michael. She once commented that she didn't know what to call me.

There are several things that I remember and miss about her, but there are two specific edicts that I have chosen to live by (the others just riddle me with guilt when not followed): 1) dress appropriately for the occasion and be aware of your impression management. Norma was the one who 'professionalized' me in terms of talking, acting, and looking like a sociologist and a professional; 2) if you're going to be a dues paying member in an association, attend the annual meeting and be active. As you may or may not know, Norma was quite active in the ASA, the SSA/SSSA, and the SSSP and made it a point to serve on committees, present at and attend the annual meetings of all of these.

I also learned to love the discipline. As a Sociologist, Norma was passionate about her work and she believed in what she did. She was vocal about social injustice rooted in class, race/ethnic identity, and age. As a mentor, she facilitated community building among the graduate students and held us responsible for being a close cohort. Additionally, I think the students who worked with her can attest to typically leaving her office after a meeting with 2 additional readings. She was constantly giving advice and more importantly constantly giving support.

Norma chaired my Master's thesis committee and was dedicated to making my study what she thought it needed to be. I remember calling her at home when I felt like I could no longer find respondents. After hearing that I had only reached an N of 15 she said, "Fifteen doesn't make a thesis." She implored me to be patient and to persevere and to get back to work. I was also the student Norma decided to engage in a social breaching exercise. In a class called Sociological Analysis we sat in a circle and I can remember being mortified as she held me to explain exactly what I meant by what I was saying to her (which was "I'm reading the paper" when she asked, "Joe, what are you doing?"). Students around me cringed and I could see sympathy in their faces. When Norma let me off the hook we had a good laugh (at my expense) and for the rest of my time in graduate school, various other students who were not in the class would say, "Oh, you're the one Norma Garfinkeled?!" As our relationship evolved she still mentored and offered advice about the job search, about tenure, etc. I will miss our monthly conversations.

### **Memories from Dr. Cheryl Robinson**

As I gathered with family and friends to say goodbye to Norma Williams in Kingsville, TX last week, it was apparent to me how deeply she had touched our lives

and how tremendously she will be missed. While I was aware of the gravity of her condition, I was still shocked by her death. As I reflected on her many accomplishments, I fancifully thought that perhaps Norma had prescient knowledge of the brevity of her life. More realistically, Norma Williams was an exceptional person who lived life to its fullest and made every minute count. She was dedicated to her family, her friends and the discipline of Sociology for which she worked tirelessly.

I met Norma as a first year graduate student at The University of Texas at Austin where she was in the final stages of finishing the program. She was a wonderful advisor on how to survive the process of graduate school and our friendship grew in the years following graduation. I will miss her kindness, her wisdom, and most especially her sense of humor, laced with irony that always made me laugh and then think.

Norma accomplished much in her lifetime, including being a recipient of an NSF grant, voted first Mexican American President of SSA and awarded SSSP's Lee Founders Award. Of these accomplishments, I know that Norma wanted to be remembered for her publication of The Mexican American Family: Tradition and Change. This work documented the role of social change on Mexican American traditions and social roles in the family and social class difference in these changes. At the time of her death, she was in the process of revising this book for a 2nd edition as well as beginning a much anticipated book on Mexican American elders. Despite the disruption of these projects by her death, her influence will be reflected in the work of the many students she mentored.

### **Would you like to Serve the Division as Chair-Elect?**

The division will be holding elections for a Chair-Elect this year. Speaking as the current division chair, I can truly say that this one of the more pleasant service responsibilities that I have had over the years. I realize that many people are overwhelmed with their other responsibilities, but this is an opportunity to serve the academic community while at the same time to meet people with similar interests at other universities and applied organizations. At the same time, the "job" is not as demanding as many that I have had over the years. Primarily, division chairs benefit greatly from an executive office that is helpful, knowledgeable, and supportive which greatly reduces the hassle of serving in the office. Furthermore, as most of you already know, SSSP is composed of a group of great people. One of the things that I liked most about SSSP the first time I attended the meetings was that the meetings and people seemed so welcoming. This makes serving so much easier because people are so supportive and helpful. If you think that you might be interested in running for election, you should probably go the SSSP website and read the information provided at <http://www.sssp1.org/extras/ROLESRES.pdf> that outlines the responsibilities of the division chair. If you are interested in running for election for the chair-elect for this division, please contact me at [tdietz@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:tdietz@mail.ucf.edu) or (407) 823-2227.

## **Call for Papers, 2005 Annual Meeting**

By now, you should have received your official call for papers for the 2005 annual meeting. This year's meeting is scheduled to be held in Philadelphia and promises to be an exciting meeting and locale. Our division is sponsoring three regular sessions and co-sponsoring five additional sessions with other divisions. Please take a moment to skim through the sessions and consider submitting a paper to one of these timely and interesting sessions. If you have questions, all the organizers would love to hear from you. Papers are accepted using a competitive process. If you are interested in submitting a paper, please follow the procedures outlined at <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm?tsmi=23>.

### **Regular Sessions**

**Session I:** The Unintended Consequences of Social Problems Solutions: White House and Other Conferences and the Politics of Policies and Programs for Older Adults and Children - **THEMATIC**

Organizer: Judith Gordon  
Psychiatry Dept, Yale Univ, Grace Bldg 618, 25 Park Street  
New Haven, CT 06520; [judith.gordon@yale.edu](mailto:judith.gordon@yale.edu)

**Session II:** Children and Youth

Organizer: Valerie Leiter  
Soc Dept, Simmons College, 300 The Fenway  
Boston, MA 02115; [valerie.leiter@simmons.edu](mailto:valerie.leiter@simmons.edu)

**Session III:** Retirement

Organizer and Chair-Elect, Carolyn Perrucci  
Soc & Anthro Dept, STON 302, Purdue Univ  
West Lafayette, IN 47906; [perruccic@soc.purdue.edu](mailto:perruccic@soc.purdue.edu)

### **Co-Sponsored Sessions**

**Session VI:** Elder Abuse and Victimization (Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Division and the Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division)

Organizer: Brian Smith  
Soc, Anthro and Social Work Dept, ANSPA 137  
Central Michigan Univ  
Mount Pleasant, MI 48859; [smith1b@cmich.edu](mailto:smith1b@cmich.edu)

**Session X:** Issues of Drug and Alcohol Use and Misuse in the Older Adult Population (Drinking and Drugs Division and the Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division)

Co-organizer and Chair: Tracy L. Dietz  
Soc & Anthro Dept, Univ of Central FL, PO Box 25000  
Orlando, FL 32816; [tdietz@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:tdietz@mail.ucf.edu)

and

Co-organizer and Chair: Margaret S. Kelley  
Soc Dept, Univ of Oklahoma, 331 Kaufman Hall  
Norman, OK 73019  
W: 405-325-1751; F: 405-325-7825; [mkelley@ou.edu](mailto:mkelley@ou.edu)

**Session XV:** Children, Consumption, and Popular Culture (Family Division and the Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division)

Organizer: Dan Cook  
3720 W 71<sup>st</sup> Street  
Chicago, IL 60629  
W: 773-735-2928; F: 773-581-6564; [dtcook@uiuc.edu](mailto:dtcook@uiuc.edu)

**Session XX:** Youth, Aging, and Institutional Ethnography (Institutional Ethnography Division and the Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division)

Organizer: Suzanne Vaughan  
Social and Behavioral Sciences, Arizona State Univ-West  
Phoenix, AZ 85069-7100  
W: 602-543-6011; F: 602-543-6004; [svaughan@asu.edu](mailto:svaughan@asu.edu)

**Session XXVI:** Aging in Special Populations: The Aging Experiences of Racial and Ethnic Minorities and Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgendered Individuals (Racial and Ethnic Minorities Division; Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities Division; and the Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division)

Organizer: J. Michael Cruz  
Soc Dept, Univ of Southern Maine  
96 Falmouth St, PO Box 9300  
Portland ME 04104-9300; [jmcruz@usm.maine.edu](mailto:jmcruz@usm.maine.edu)

### **Call for Submissions for Student Paper Competition**

All graduate students are encouraged to apply for this annual award competition. The paper should be related to the broad Division interest. The paper should not exceed 30 double-spaced pages and should be prepared for anonymous review (with the author specified on a title page but not referred to in other parts of the text). Current graduate students and recent graduates (who received their degrees after January 2004) may submit a paper if it was written while still a student. Papers based on theses or dissertations are acceptable. Please do not submit the

thesis or dissertation itself. Co-authored papers are acceptable as long as all listed authors are current graduate students. Double submission to other SSSP award competitions will be disqualified. The award recipient will be required to present the winning paper at the 2005 annual meeting in Philadelphia. Thus, applicants MUST submit at least an abstract of the paper to any Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division organizer (or co-sponsored organizer) by the January 31, 2005 deadline. Two awards, providing at least two papers are deemed meritorious, will be made. The first place winner will receive a monetary prize of \$100 and SSSP registration for the 2005 annual meeting. The second place winner will receive a monetary prize of \$60. In addition to submitting the abstract to a session organizer by the January 31, 2005 deadline, applicants must send three copies of the paper along with a letter of application for the award no later than March 1, 2005 to Dr. Tracy L. Dietz, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, P.O. Box 25000, University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, 32816.