I. Interview with work-family and gender scholar Dr. Katherine Y. Lin

In each newsletter, we feature an interview with one of our SIG members about their current and future work. This newsletter interview is with Dr. Katherine Y. Lin. She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, US. She also is the Secretary/Webmaster of our WFRN SIG. Our SIG has been enriched by the fantastic ideas Kathy consistently brings to the table.

1. WFRN’s most recent conference, you facilitated the session sponsored by the Gender and Work-Family SIG in which we explored future directions for research in this area. What were some of the key “takeaways” from this session?

At WFRN 2018, I got to facilitate a super fun, and extremely generative discussion, at the Gender SIG roundtable titled “New Directions in Gender, Work, and Family Research.” I think the most important takeaway that I got from the conversation was that this field is incredibly vibrant, with a lot of important questions being asked, and novel research being undertaken! Our participants represented a wide range
of disciplines, including sociology, economics, management and organizations, and consulting. There was also an important global perspective as we had participants from a variety of places around the world, ranging from Hungary and the Netherlands, to Omaha, Nebraska!

During the first half of the conversation, we tried to answer the question, “What do we *need* to know about these topics?” Our conversation circled around two ideas: First, as scholars who are interested in social change, what do we mean when we say “gender equality”? Much of our research aims to unpack mechanisms that promote inequality, and yet we do not systematically evaluate whether egalitarian attitudes and ideas necessarily lead to egalitarian outcomes in work and family. Relatedly, we also discussed the limited focus on men’s experiences, relative to scholarship on women’s experiences, and how to pursue scholarship that can simultaneously highlight both men’s and women’s experiences but also pay attention to gendered systems of power and privilege that privilege aspects of masculinity.

During the second half of the conversation, we brainstormed types of studies that might be useful in generating new knowledge regarding the above questions. We discussed the promise of studies explicitly designed to examine how multiple levels of analyses interact to shape gendered experiences. For example, broadening out from just institution- or individual-level, studies, to more “meso-level” studies that examine family or couple units, as well as how organizations and professions operate like a translational link between institutional and cultural norms and individual/family interactions. Here, comparative team ethnographies could be helpful for observing these key mechanisms, as well as help scholars disentangle multiple forms of (in)equality, such as perceived vs. observed (in)equalities.

We concluded with a list of emergent topics, including: a need to study millennials and post-millennials as ostensibly “children of the gender revolution”, the role of developing technologies in shaping both paid and unpaid labor, the impact of major demographic shifts (aging populations, increasing heterogeneity in family structures) on work and family, and whether or not progress in the realm of gender equality will always be accompanied by some form of resistance or pushback.

It was so fun, and such a privilege to be able to have a conversation with such a diverse group of scholars about this topic, and I hope that it helped push the field, or at least, our respective scholarship, forward!

You recently co-authored a manuscript in Advances in Life Course Research entitled “Working, parenting and work-home spillover: Gender differences in the work-home interface across the life course.” What are some of the main findings from this study? How did gender come into play?

The main goal of this study was to broaden our thinking about the work-family interface beyond initial parenthood (i.e. work-family spillover among new parents) to thinking about how negative and positive work-family experiences can shift over the life course, particularly as children age from infancy to adulthood, and how might these experiences look different for men and women. We used two waves of the Mid-Life in the United States Study (MIDUS I and II) and estimated change-score models that examined the extent to which changes in child stage were associated with changes in work-home spillover. When we demarcate life course stage by the age of one’s oldest child (i.e. infant/toddler, school-aged, adolescent, young adulthood), we find that positive and negative work-home spillover does shift across the life course. While this life course pattern is largely explained by age for negative spillover, suggesting a “developmental” pattern, positive spillover is more linked with shifts in life course stage, such as having a child entering school, or entering into young adulthood.
With regards to gender, early in the life course, we find that new fathers experience an increase in positive work-home spillover, whereas new mothers experience a decline. We argue that this is potential evidence in favor of a “breadwinning” hypothesis, where new fathers may feel like maintaining employment while becoming a father is a positive experience because this allows them to provide for their newly growing family. Across the life course, and as the child grows older, we find that mother’s experiences of spillover are more tightly linked with their children’s development, relative to father’s experiences. For example, mothers of children entering school-ages, as well as of children entering young adulthood, experience an increase in negative home-work spillover, whereas men experience no change, or even a decline in negative spillover. We ultimately argue that it is not sufficient to understand gendered experiences at the work-family interface at only one point in time, as gendered work and family roles and expectations ebb and flow across life.

2. Please tell us about one of your current projects (i.e., something not currently published) that incorporates gender into the study of work-family issues.

What is currently occupying much of my brain space is an interview project that examines medical students and residents making work and family decisions in the context of their medical training. I am interested in how younger generations are managing (or not) to merge their ideals and aspirations, with actual career and family decisions, within a particularly structured environment. I focus on two key points of training – 1) when students choose where to complete their residency, and 2) when residents choose where to obtain fellowship training, or where to apply for their first job. I talked with 30 medical students (N=14 men, N=16 women) and 31 medical residents (N=18 men, N=13 women) about all aspects of their decision-making, including what their most desired outcome was, and what their potential back up plans were, and how they thought about the tradeoffs inherent in their decisions. The data are really rich! Which is exciting, but also somewhat daunting. At the moment, I am using these data and writing three different papers: First, a paper looking at how life course transitions and ideas about an ideal life course shape decision making. Second, a paper on gender differences in the timing of family plans. And third, a paper on how the medical socialization process imparts not only lessons about how to be a good physician, but also sends implicit messages about what that means for one’s personal and family lives.

3. Can you tell us about a few gender and work-family publications that have been especially influential in your work?

There are so many to choose from! I think Mary Blair-Loy’s Competing Devotions holds a special status in my heart when it comes to thinking about gender work and family. Her argument around devotion schema, and the frameworks that people use to assign moral and value to their lives, particularly around difficult decisions, is just a really compelling explanation to me. I also love returning to The Second Shift by Arlie Hochschild with Anne Machung because I think the writing is really lovely, but also again, the continued applicability of her findings from decades ago. Both Blair-Loy and Hochschild remind me about the importance of emotions in this nexus of gender, work and family. I am also really excited and inspired by some newer, up and coming scholarship by my peers and junior colleagues, particularly those that are tackling this question of what the “children of the gender revolution” might be experiencing. Two pieces that come to mind are 1) a recently published piece on egg freezing by NYU graduate students Eliza Brown and Mary Patrick that focuses on the role of temporality and life course
in the decision by women to freeze their eggs ("Time, Anticipation, and the Life Course: Egg Freezing as Temporarily Disentangling Romance and Reproduction" ASR Sept 2018) and 2) a paper by Jaclyn S. Wong, an assistant professor at Univ. South Carolina which is a lovely qualitative and longitudinal study of how couples make decisions to migrate for job opportunities ("Competing Desires: How Young Adult Couples Negotiate Moving for Career Opportunities" Gender and Society 2018).

5. You teach a class on gender, work, and family at Dartmouth College. What are some of the issues students find most engaging?

The class is called “Unstalling the Stalled Revolution: Gender (In)equality at Work and at Home.” It is taught seminar/discussion style, culminating in a large research project that the students collectively design. While we read works by Arlie Hochschild, Mary Blair-Loy, Kathleen Gerson, and the like, the course is designed to have the students hypothesize, based on prior research, how their peers and their generation is thinking about future work and family issues, and then to generate a novel interview study to test their hypotheses. I think overall, the students are incensed to better understand why gender inequality persists even among their own cohorts, and thus latch onto some of the cultural and structural explanations that scholars have advanced. One of the concepts that nearly every student was drawn to was the concept of “work devotion” (Blair-Loy 2003) and how such a powerful cultural schema that they read about in a study of professional women, was being inculcated in them at their own elite institution. Students were also intrigued by England’s (2010) notion of the continued inequality in the “personal realm” (despite advances in the professional realm) citing how dating and hooking up norms on college campuses continue to reinforce gendered realities, and incentivize students to continue to “do gender”.

II. Call for Future Newsletter Submissions

- Please submit items for our next newsletter. The deadline for submissions is March 1, 2019. We would love to share your recent publications (e.g., books and articles) and recent successes (promotions, honors, and so forth) with other SIG members.

- We would also love to hear about any upcoming work-family and gender related conferences or special issues of journals.

- If you’d like to write an essay for a future newsletter, please contact us with your idea! Send ideas to Krista Lynn Minnotte at krista.minnotte@und.edu

III. Recent publications by Work-Family and Gender SIG members


• Qian, Yue, and Wen Fan. Forthcoming. “Occupational Sex Composition and Men’s and Women’s Affective Well-being At Work.” Journal of Happiness Studies. (https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10902-018-0039-3?wt_mc=Internal.Event.1.SEM.ArticleAuthorOnlineFirst&ut m_source=ArticleAuthorContributingOnlineFirst&ut m_medium=email&ut m_content=AA_en_06082018&ArticleAuthorContributingOnlineFirst_20181006)


IV. Upcoming conference of interest to SIG members

• The 8th International Community, Work and Family Conference will take place on May 23 – 25, 2019 at the University of Malta. The theme is “Community, Work, and Family in Diverse Contexts and Changing Times.” More information can be found at https://www.um.edu.mt/events/cwf2019

V. Recent success of SIG members

• Rense Nieuwenhuis has received funding from the Swedish Research Council for a project entitled “In it together? Supporting women’s employment to reduce economic inequality among all households.” This 5-year, comparative project was funded in the amount of 4,5 million Swedish kronor (nearly $500,000 in U.S. dollars).

  For more information about this valuable project, please visit: http://www.rensenieuwenhuis.nl/in-it-together/

• Caitlyn Collins has a forthcoming book entitled Making Motherhood Work: How Women Manage Careers and Caregiving. This book uses rich interview data to examine the experiences of mothers across four countries: Sweden, Germany, Italy, and the United States.
For more information about this book, please see: https://press.princeton.edu/titles/13324.html

- Marisa Matias was recently appointed to the position of Assistant Professor of Psychology and Educational Sciences at the University of Porto.