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Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
Division for Inclusive Social Development

BIONOTES OF PARTICIPANTS

Regional Expert Group Meeting for North America
in preparation for the 30th anniversary of the International Year of Family,
(IYF+30) 2024
Orlando, Florida, 11 November 2023

Megatrends & Families: Focus on Demographic Change, Migration and Urbanization in North America



Renata Kaczmarek is the Social Affairs Officer and the Focal Point on Family in the Division for Inclusive Social Development in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs at the United Nations Secretariat in New York. In this capacity, she acts as a spokesperson on family issues for the United Nations Secretariat. She prepares publications and drafts UN reports on a variety of subjects relating to families and organizes international and regional expert group meetings on family policy issues, observances of the

International Day of Families and other events to raise awareness of the importance of family policies for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals and targets. She is currently engaged in the preparations for the 30th anniversary of the International Year of the Family, 2024. She holds a Master of Science Degree in Social Sciences and Bachelor of Arts in Political Science as well as United Nations Studies Graduate Diploma.

Dr. Mihaela Robila is Professor of Human Development and Family Science at Queens College City University of New York. Her scholarship is focused on international families and policies. Besides publishing peer-reviewed articles, she edited the [*Handbook of Family Policies across the Globe*](#) (Springer, 2014), and *Families in Eastern Europe* (Elsevier, 2004), wrote *Eastern European Immigrant Families* (Routledge, 2008) and co-edited [*Global Perspectives on Family Life Education*](#) (Springer, 2018). Her work has been supported by funding from the U.S. Dept. of State - American Councils for International Education, Fulbright, United Nations, Spencer Foundation, Fahs Beck Fund for Research, Jacobs Foundation, and CUNY, among others. She is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association Divisions 52 (International Psychology), 43 (Family Psychology), and 37 (Child and Family Policy and Practice). She has been NCFR Representative at the United Nations since 2009. Dr. Robila was a 2021-2022 American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (AAAS) Science and Technology Policy Fellow (STPF) in the Division of Social and Economic Sciences (SES) in the Directorate for Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation (NSF). Since July 2022 Dr. Robila has been an Intermittent Expert in the SES Division at NSF.



Dr. Ignacio Socias holds a doctorate in Law and serves as the Director of International Relations for the International Federation for Family Development. Since 2010, his role has involved extensive global engagement in coordination with United Nations' activities. He has visited 64 cities in 45 countries, participated in 206 international meetings, delivered 198 keynote speeches, and conducted 87 high-level meetings with government representatives. He has been instrumental in driving the global projects 'The SDGs and families' and 'Inclusive Cities for Sustainable Families'. Furthermore, he represented IFFD in the European Commission project 'FamiliesAndSocieties' (2013-2017) and has actively participated in high-level family-focused events at the European Parliament, the Committee of Regions, and the Economic and Social Committee. In recognition of his contributions, Ignacio Socias has received several prestigious awards in Europe and America.

Dr. Bahira Sherif Trask is a Professor of Human Development and Family Sciences at the University of Delaware. She holds a B.A. in Political Science with a concentration in International Relations from Yale University and a Ph.D. in Cultural Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on globalization, women's employment, and family change in Western and non-Western countries, and she presents regularly on these topics at international forums. Recently, Dr. Trask has worked on issues of urbanization and migration from a global perspective. Dr. Trask has authored and edited several books including *Women, Work, and Globalization: Challenges and Opportunities* (Routledge, 2014), *Globalization and Families: Accelerated Systemic Social Change*, (Springer, 2010) and *Cultural Diversity and Families* (Sage, 2007), as well as having published over 100 peer-reviewed articles, chapters, and reports.



Much of Dr. Trask's scholarship has been informed through participation with a number of international, national and community-based research projects that focus on diversity, gender and work, and strengthening low-income families. Her work has been funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Marguirite Casey Foundation, Blueprints Delaware and various local community initiatives. Dr. Trask is a fellow of NCFR, the National Council on Family Relations, she has won the Jan Trost award for excellence in international scholarship and in 2017 she was awarded the University of Delaware Excellence in Teaching Award. In 2022 she received the prestigious Groves Sussman Award for her work in International Family Studies and Policy.



Dr. Norma J. Bond Burgess is the first African American to receive a Ph.D. in Sociology from North Carolina State University. A retired Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Professor of Family Studies, and Associate Provost for Diversity and Special Initiatives from Lipscomb University, Dr. Burgess served as president-elect of the NCFR Board of Directors from 2020 to 2022 and President from 2021 to 2023. She was recognized by NCFR with the Marie Peters Award and holds Fellow status in the organization. Burgess has served NCFR as a member in various capacities since 1986. She has held faculty appointments at Mississippi State University, Syracuse University, Chatham University in Pittsburgh, and Lipscomb. Post-doctoral work was conducted at the Center for Research on Women at Memphis State University (now the University of Memphis), Summer Faculty member at Cornell University, and Visiting Faculty member at the University of the Aegean in Rhodes, Greece.

She has served as a mentor to numerous colleagues, students, and junior professionals throughout her career including two college presidents, professors in various ranks, department chairs, graduate, and undergraduate students. She has developed and led study abroad programs, presented papers and workshops in multiple countries around the world, and in the U.S. Burgess developed relationships internationally between universities. A successful business woman, she was recognized in 2021 as a Woman of Influence by the Nashville Business Journal.

Dr. Sarah Brauner-Otto is an Associate Professor of Sociology and Director of the Centre on Population Dynamics at McGill University. Dr. Brauner-Otto is a social demographer studying global family change with a focus on the relationship between social context (e.g. schools, community organizations) and demographic behaviors over the life course. She is particularly interested in which dimensions of social context (e.g. characteristics of schools or health services) matter the most and how context influences the individual. Brauner-Otto's current research focuses on labor markets as a key dimension of social context influencing global family change. This work, funded by SSHRC and NIH, uses the Chitwan Valley Family Study to investigate the relationship between female labor force participation and child outcomes in Nepal, a poor country where participation in paid, non-family labor has only recently become widespread. Using data from low fertility settings where women's labor force participation is well established, she will investigate how specific dimensions of work (e.g. job autonomy and security) may influence child well-being, fertility intentions and behavior, and other aspects of family life. Dr. Brauner-Otto holds a Ph.D. in sociology and Master's in Social Work from the University of Michigan- Ann Arbor.



Dr. Shelley Clark is a James McGill Professor of Sociology at McGill University. After she joined the Department of Sociology at McGill in 2006, she held a Canada Research Chair (Tier II) in Gender, Youth and Global Health and was the founding Director of the Centre on Population Dynamics. She is actively engaged in the demographic organizations and has served on the boards of the Population Association of America and Canadian Population Society. Currently, she is a Council Member of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population and a deputy editor for *Demography*. Clark's work examines family change, health and well-being, and life course transitions in North America

and sub-Saharan Africa. Much of her previous work has focused on the consequences of child marriage for young women and the well-being of single mothers and their children. Her current research agenda focuses on children, youth, and families in rural Canada and the U.S. She regularly presents her findings at academic conferences and international organizations, including the World Bank, WHO, UN, and the Population Council.

Dr. Joseph G. Grzywacz is the Associate Dean for Research and Faculty in the College of Health and Human Sciences at San José State University – the most transformative university in the U.S. Grzywacz is an interdisciplinary social scientist, earning a B.S. in Health Promotion and Wellness, a M.S. in Human and Community Resources, a Ph.D. in Child and Family Studies, and postdoctoral training in Social Ecology. Dr. Grzywacz is internationally viewed as an authority on the health implications of everyday work and family life for adults and children. Dr. Grzywacz’s research has been continuously funded by federal agencies like the National Institutes of Health for over 20 years; he has published over 270 peer-reviewed publications. Most of his research focuses on immigrants but also addresses parallel topics in distinct geographic and cultural contexts around the world. Underlying his research is the conviction that every worker should be able to earn a living and support their family without harm to themselves or their dependents from performing that work.



Dr. Raeann Hamon, CFLE is a Distinguished Professor of Family Science and Gerontology at Messiah University in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, where she also served as Department Chair for 31 years. She earned her M.S. and Ph.D. from Virginia Tech in Family Studies, as well as a Graduate Certificate in Gerontology. Her research and writing focus on family theories, the discipline of Family Science, Family Science pedagogy, the

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, filial responsibility, and intergenerational relationships. She has authored and edited several books including *Exploring Family Theories* (Oxford University, 2022), *Cultural Diversity and Families* (Sage, 2007), *International Family Studies: Developing Curricula and Teaching Tools* (Haworth, 2006), *International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family* (Macmillan, 2003), and *Mate Selection across Cultures* (Sage, 2003). She has also served as guest editor of several special collections in journals, the latest project devoted to *Family Science Careers Through the Eyes of Theory for Family Science Review*.

Dr. Hamon teaches courses in family dynamics, Family Life Education methodology, interpersonal relationships, psychology of aging, and sociology of aging where she employs a variety of experiential educational strategies in and out of the classroom. Generations United presented her with a Program of Distinction Award in recognition of the intergenerational service-learning program she created for her Sociology of Aging course. The purpose of the Elder Service Partner Program is to link the lives of college-aged students with those of older adults to enrich both by building meaningful intergenerational relationships while serving together. Dr. Hamon is very involved with several professional organizations. She is currently chair of the International Section of NCFR, treasurer of the Mid-Atlantic Council on Family Relations, and board member of Groves Conference on Marriage and Family. She was selected as an NCFR Fellow in 2011 and received the Felix Berardo Mentoring Award from NCFR in 2016, and a Cognella Innovation in Teaching Family Science Award in 2018.

Dr. Margo Hilbrecht is the Executive Director of the Vanier Institute of the Family, where she is responsible for activating and disseminating knowledge of family diversities and well-being in Canada. She has extensive experience in the non-profit sector, including the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, and Greo, a knowledge translation and exchange organization focused on gambling-related harm. She has written and collaborated on academic articles and reports about gendered experiences of time use, leisure, work-life integration, and the social and health consequences of changing employment practices. Margo has also conducted research with academic, local government and not-for-profit partners on well-being in diverse communities across the country. She completed her Ph.D. at the University of Waterloo and has an Adjunct appointment in the Faculty of Health.



Dr. Bethany Letiecq is an associate professor of research methods in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University. She is a critical feminist scholar and has expertise in utilizing community-based participatory action research to build community-university research partnerships with families and communities experiencing social, economic, and legal marginalization. For the past 10 years, she has worked in partnership with Central American immigrant mothers (Amigas de la Comunidad) to conduct research on the ways in which various forms of structural oppression interlock to condition and constrain immigrant family functioning.

She also studies how communities organize to build power and solidarity, resist structural oppression and the reproduction of inequality, and change systems. Her research is published across varied outlets, including blogs and national reports, as well as in academic journals such as the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, the *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, the *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, the *Journal of Family Issues*, and the *Journal of Family and Community Health*. She is currently the President of the Virginia Conference of the American Association of University Professors, co-founder of the GMU Coalition of Worker Rights, and incoming President of the National Council on Family Relations.

Dr. Hilary A. Rose, CFLE, is a recently retired family scholar from Concordia University in Montreal, Canada. Although Canadian, she completed her graduate degrees in child and family development in the United States (M.Sc., ASU, 1992; Ph.D., UGA, 1997). She has studied, researched, and taught about gender in the context of family and across the lifespan from a biopsychosocial perspective for 35 years. Her publications include work on gender-based reasoning in children, risk and resiliency in youth, family connectedness in families with LGB youth, and more recently, same-sex marriage, historical trauma in survivors of Canada's residential schools, and family policy in Canada—all from a gendered lens.



Dr. Colleen Vesely is an associate professor of Early Childhood Education in the College of Education and Human Development at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Dr. Vesely's work uses a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach to understand how families from immigrant and other marginalized and minoritized backgrounds negotiate parenthood in the U.S., especially in terms of navigating the early care and education (ECE) and K-12 education systems. Dr. Vesely's research is published in top family science and early childhood education peer-reviewed journals, including: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Family Relations*, *Journal of Family Theory and Review*, *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *Early Education and Development*, and *Early Childhood Education Journal*. Dr. Vesely's work has been funded by the Office for Child Care in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as a Child Care Scholar, the Bruhn Morris Family Foundation, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and the Fairfax County Office for Children. Dr. Vesely teaches courses focused on family engagement in early care and education, family

processes, and qualitative research methods. Dr. Vesely received her Ph.D. in Family Science from the University of Maryland- College Park in 2011.

Dr. Ruben P. Viramontez Anguiano is a Professor and the Founding Chair of the Human Development and Family Relations Program in the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. He completed his M.S. in Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) from Iowa State University and his Ph.D. in HDFS from Michigan State University. Dr. Viramontez Anguiano is the son of immigrant Mexican parents and has dedicated over 30 years of his life to serving immigrant families, families of color and other underserved families in 9 different states. Through his Esperanza College Group he has helped hundreds of Latino/a students, and their families establish a successful pathway to higher education including earning scholarships. His research has focused on rural and urban Latino/a families, schools and communities. He has been instrumental in developing the first bilingual (Spanish and English) HDFS in the United States and Canada. As the Founding Chair at the University of Colorado Denver the HDFS program is one of the first that has concentrated on diversity, equity and inclusion. He has received numerous awards, honors and recognition for his teaching and his work in education and the community with diverse communities.



Dr. Yan Ruth Xia is a professor in Child, Youth and Family Studies in the College of Education and Human Sciences of University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). She received her Ph.D. in Family Science with a minor in Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Education, and M.S. with a specialization in Marriage and Family Therapy at UNL. Her research focuses on family strengths and stresses in Asian immigrant and Chinese families with adolescents. Her research also examines the effects of contextual factors on parenting, parent-adolescent relationship, and youth outcomes. In 2018, she became the [first Husker professor to receive a Fulbright Distinguished Chair Award](#), and in 2020, she received the Jan Trost Award for Outstanding Contributions to Comparative Family Studies, a lifelong achievement honor from the National Council on Family Relations International Section. Dr. Xia has been a long-time, active NCFR member and a Certified Family Life Educator since 2001. Currently, she serves as a member at large on the NCFR Board of Directors. She is a dedicated teacher and mentor, and the recipient of the NCFR 2017 Felix Berardo Scholarship Award for Mentoring. She is passionate about research-informed practice and policymaking and has served as an evaluator for NIFA CYFAR and National 4-H Council project.