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Introducing Dr. Heili Pals

Dr. Heili Pals joins UCF from the Texas A&M University, where she is currently a post-doctoral research fellow in the Laboratory of Social Deviance. Dr. Pals graduated with a Ph.D. in Sociology from Stanford University in September, 2006. She received her Master's Degree in Sociology from Stanford University and Bachelor's Degree in Sociology from Tartu University in Estonia.

Dr. Pals was born and raised in Estonia: a small country that until 1991 was part of the former Soviet Union. She grew up in a state controlled society and participated in one of the most remarkable peaceful independence movements in recent history. She witnessed firsthand the transformation of a state controlled economy to a capitalist one. These experiences inspired her interest in learning how social contexts shape the relationships between adolescents' behaviors, self evaluations, and adults' social positions and attainment.

Heili's doctoral dissertation examined the effects of adolescent noncompliance on labor market outcomes in regions of the former Soviet Union. Currently, she is working on several articles that focus on the interrelations of self-feelings, deviant behavior, and neighborhood contexts. Her research interests, in general, lie at the intersections of stratification, social psychology, deviance, and the life course.

Dr. Pals has published in *Social Psychology Quarterly* and *International Journal of Sociology* and co-authored a book on the participation in the US Census published by Russell Sage Foundation.

Dr. Pals is looking forward to teaching quantitative methods at UCF. She is excited to meet her new colleagues and students and hopes to enjoy hiking and swimming in the warm Florida weather. Among her hobbies are photography, rock climbing, and swing and ballroom dancing.



Sociology = Good Paying Jobs

Did you know that Forbes Magazine ranked Sociology as the 17th most lucrative major? Check out the story, "The Most Lucrative College Majors: From Computer Science to Criminal Justice: Which Majors Pay and Which Don't?" by Kurt Badenhausen. You can find this story at: <http://abcnews.go.com/Business/CareerManagement/Story?id=5304488&page=1>

Student Publications Are Stacking Up!

Donley, A. M. and J. D. Wright, "Cleaning Up the Streets: Community Efforts to Combat Homelessness by Criminalizing Homeless Behaviors." Chapter 6 in Robert McNamara (ed.), *Homelessness in America*, Volume 3, "Solutions to Homelessness." Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008: pp. 75-92.

Donley, A. M. and J. D. Wright, "Shelter Life for Homeless Men: Risk or Respite." Chapter 4 in Robert McNamara (ed.), *Homelessness in America*, Volume 1, "Faces of Homelessness." Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008: pp. 43-60.

Nabors, E., & Jasinski, J. "Violence Perpetration among College Students: The Role of Gender Role and Gendered Violence Attitudes" Accepted for publication at *Feminist Criminology*.

Swart, B. "Journals by Young Women in a Global Slum." Accepted for publication by the *Journal of Women and Social Work*.

Taylor, R., & Nabors, E. "Pink or Blue...Black and Blue? Examining Pregnancy as a Predictor of Intimate Partner Violence and Femicide" Accepted for publication in the journal *Violence Against Women*.

Truman, J., & Mustaine, E. "Strategies for College Student Stalking Victims: Examining the Information and Recommendations Available" has been accepted for publication at the *American Journal of Criminal Justice*.

Wright, J. D., **A. M. Donley**, and T. L. Dietz, (156) "Elderly Homelessness: A Growing Concern." Chapter 12 in Robert McNamara (ed.), *Homelessness in America*, Volume 1, "Faces of Homelessness." Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008: pp. 175-188.

Wright, J. D., **A. M. Donley**, and K. F. Gotham, "Housing Policy, the Low Income Housing Crisis, and the Problem of Homelessness." Chapter 2 in Robert McNamara (ed.), *Homelessness in America*, Volume 2, "Causes of Homelessness." Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008: pp. 31-48.



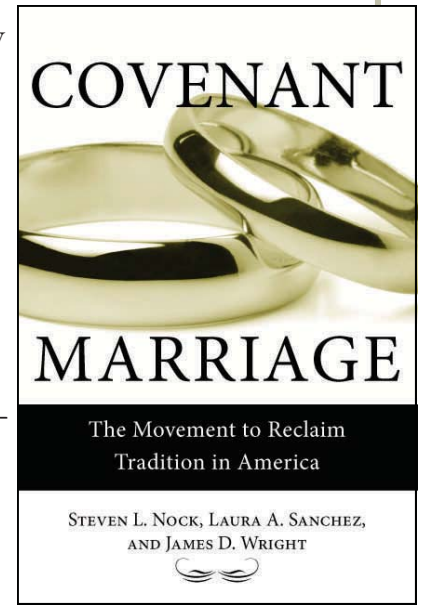
Wright, Colleagues Publish Book on Covenant Marriage

In 1997, Louisiana passed its so-called covenant marriage law, which among other innovations gave marrying couples the option of voluntarily surrendering their rights to a no-fault divorce. UCF sociology professor Jim Wright along with his colleagues Steve Nock (formerly of the University of Virginia and now deceased) and Laura Sanchez (Bowling Green State University) gathered data on covenant newlyweds from 1997 to 2003 and have just published a book reporting the findings.

Covenant Marriage: The Movement to Reclaim Tradition in America (Rutgers University Press, 2008) has been hailed by Scott Stanley of the University of Denver as “a brilliant achievement and a gold mine of information on marriage in the United States. [The authors] have given us a masterpiece of thought, not only on the covenant marriage law in Louisiana, but on the broader social, legal, demographic, and religious changes that contextualized this social experiment.”

A key finding is that after five years, the divorce rate for covenant couples was about half that of standard couples, a difference largely reflecting the greater religiosity of the former group.

The book’s senior author, Steve Nock, was well-known to the UCF sociology department because he served a few years back as an outside evaluator of the program. He died early in 2008 from complications of diabetes.



Sociology at Work in the “Real World”:

Meagan C. Arrastia has been hired as a full-time research assistant for Cognitive Performance Group of Florida Inc. The Company specializes in cognitive and decision-making research using primarily qualitative methods. It also conducts program design and evaluation for groups, like the Department of Defense. Currently, Megan is working on a project with the US Marines to evaluate cultural competency of recent soldiers that were deployed. With the help of methods learned during the MA program, Meagan is now collecting data from soldiers at different bases around the country and assisting in the analysis and reporting of the findings.

News from the ISBS

Community Needs Assessment

ISBS recently completed a comprehensive community needs assessment for the Heart of Florida United Way, the largest and most extensive such study in a decade. Results from the study were instrumental in developing HFUW's new "Community Impact" funding model.

Both surveys and focus groups were used in the study. A telephone survey of 679 households in Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties conducted in the Fall of 2007 was a central element in the design. This was supplemented with a Web survey of an additional 1,434 persons and over 300 questionnaires distributed at community events.

Survey data were augmented with results from 33 focus groups done all over the Tri-County area involving a wide variety of agencies funded by HFUW, other non-profits, consumer groups, neighborhood organizations, agency executives, and donor groups. Nearly 300 people participated in the focus group process.

Findings were highly consistent across methodologies and were dominated by two main concerns: the need to make neighborhoods safer (as indicated by concerns with crime, youth violence, drug abuse, drop outs, and family violence) and the high and rising cost of living in the Orlando area (which surfaced as concerns with the high cost of health care, jobs with good wages, affordable housing, hunger, homelessness, and the high cost of child care). When asked what problems community leaders should tackle *first*, affordable healthcare, affordable housing, employment and financial stability were at the top of the list.

ISBS representatives Jim Wright, Jana Jasinski and Amy Donley presented the results of the study at a series of community leader forums around the region, to the HFUW Board of Directors, and to the Editorial Board of the Orlando Sentinel, among other venues. Release of the report was covered by the Sentinel and other local media. The entire needs assessment report can be accessed through the Heart of Florida United Way web site:

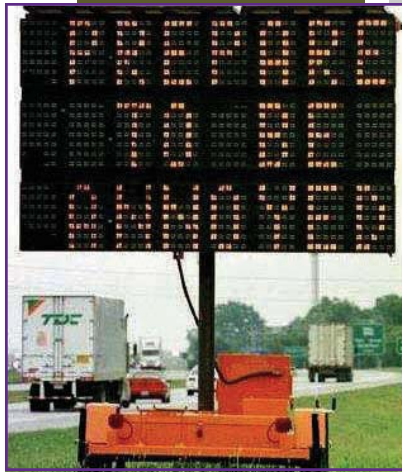
<http://www.hfuw.org/>

5-1-1 Marketing Plan

Under contract to the marketing firm Global-5, ISBS recently completed a series of statewide focus groups designed to help the Florida Department of Transportation more effectively market its 5-1-1 service.

FDOT's 5-1-1 Traffic Information Service is a free phone and Internet service that provides real-time traffic information on all Florida interstate highways, the Florida Turnpike and major roadways in the state's metropolitan areas. The system has recently undergone a dramatic change involving the integration of what were five regional systems into one seamless statewide service. The new system also takes advantage of the latest technology to personalize traffic updates and provide customized traffic alerts.

Making consumers aware of the 5-1-1 service and its features has been a problem since the system was introduced in 2005. ISBS focus groups attempted to address both the 5-1-1 "message" (how



best to make consumers aware of the system) and related issues of system financing.

Focus groups were conducted in major markets throughout the state: Orlando, Jacksonville, Miami, Tampa, Tallahassee, Sarasota and Boca Raton. Several groups were conducted in Spanish.

The 5-1-1 study was led by ISBS Senior Research Associate Dr. Amy Donley. Her report, *Commuters' Opinions of 5-1-1: A Focus Group Study*, is available from ISBS on request.

National Merit Scholars Survey

The Institute for Social and Behavioral Sciences (ISBS) was contracted by UCF's Office of Marketing, Communications and Admissions to conduct a survey with National Merit Scholars finalists that had been offered admission to UCF to determine what influenced their decisions to choose the university that they selected. The survey was conducted both online and by telephone.

We found that most students first began thinking about which college or university to attend during the junior year, but with sizable fractions at least beginning this process before they were even in high school. Only about one in twenty postponed the process until the senior year. We also found that the campus visit is the most important source of information in making a final decision about where to go to college. College and university websites are second.

Among Merit Scholars choosing to attend UCF, UCF was rated as strong as, or stronger than, their first and second choice schools in all relevant comparisons, with the absolute majority stating that UCF was stronger in faculty interaction, the campus, the campus visit and the Honors College. The majority of non-attendees, in contrast, felt that UCF was not as strong as their first and second choice schools in academic quality, academic facilities in their program of study, the campus and the Honor's College, although in the remaining areas of comparison (interaction with faculty and the campus visit), the majority thought UCF was as strong or stronger.

Finally, UCF attendees were asked, "Which elements of the scholarship offer from UCF did you find most attractive?" Seven possible factors were presented. The most important "attractor," by far, was the scholarship award amount. Guaranteed acceptance to the Honors Program, guaranteed housing, and the UCF internship and undergraduate research programs were also relatively strong pulls.

Amy Donley Receives PhD, Promotion

The Institute's long-time project manager, Amy Donley, received her PhD degree in August, 2008, and was immediately hired as the very first ISBS post-doctoral fellow. She was also promoted to Senior Research Associate.

Dr. Donley's PhD dissertation was entitled *THE PERCEPTION OF HOMELESS PEOPLE: IMPORTANT FACTORS IN DETERMINING PERCEPTIONS OF THE HOMELESS AS DANGEROUS*. Several portions of the dissertation have already been published as chapters in Robert McNamara (ed.), *Homelessness in America*, Volumes 1-3 (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2008). Way to go, Amy! Make that *Doctor* Amy.

Other Departmental Promotions

Ms. Tami Pullen has been promoted to Coordinator of Administrative Services. You'll have to ask her what that means.

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Undergraduate Director: Libby Mustaine

Graduate Director: Jana Jasinski

Coordinator of Administrative Services:

Tami Pullin

Program Assistant: Tonya Walker

Answers to last issues faculty trivia:

- ◇ Working in a cherry factory: cleaning the brine pits — **Mustaine**
- ◇ Selling encyclopedias door to door in rural North Carolina — **Canan**
- ◇ Agricultural laborer: scooping shell corn out of bins — **Corzine**
- ◇ Raspberry picker — **Jasinski**
- ◇ Telemarketer — **Grauerholtz**
- ◇ Janitor at a church — **Cook**
- ◇ Carhop at A&W — **Shannon Carter**
- ◇ Greeter at Wal-Mart — **Scott Carter**
- ◇ Painting billboards in the hot Alabama sun — **Lynxwiler**
- ◇ Cocktail waitress in a bar near a race track where I had to wear high heels and a mini skirt — **Dietz**
- ◇ Clearing trays of uneaten food and other gross stuff at a student cafeteria — **Wright**
- ◇ Fast food restaurant worker — **Barret**



Newsletter Editors:
Dr. Jana Jasinski and Dr. Libby Mustaine

Alumni News

Master's alumni **Val Margarit** stopped by our table at the recent graduate fair and let us know that she is currently the Department Head for the Law Studies Department at New Dimensions High School in Kissimmee. In addition to keeping up with all her students she also made time to complete the New York City Marathon in four hours and thirty minutes!

Master's alumni **Brian Gentry** is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at Utah State University.

Master's alumni **Mary Collins** is currently pursuing a Ph.D. at the University of California-Santa Barbara.

Faculty Trivia: Your Sociology faculty answered the following question, "What is your favorite book?"

Can you guess which of us loves each of these "literary" works?

- ◇ *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
- ◇ *Mating* by Norman Rush
- ◇ *Snow* by Orhan Pamuk
- ◇ *Requiem for a Dream* by Hubert Selby, Jr.
- ◇ *Skinny Legs and All* by Tim Robbins
- ◇ *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Suess
- ◇ *A Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
- ◇ *Her Sister's Keeper* by Jody Picoult
- ◇ *Lords of Discipline* by Pat Conroy
- ◇ *Yertle the Turtle* by Dr. Suess

Other Departmental News:

- ◇ Dr. Shannon Houvarous is now **Dr. Shannon Carter!**
- ◇
- ◇ The **AKD Induction Ceremony** will be held on Friday, October 10 at 4pm in Cape Florida A and B of the Student Union. Please join us as our outstanding majors become members of a lifelong organization dedicated to pursuing scholarship and social science research for the purposes of service.