Resolving Inconsistent Findings Regarding Sport and Adjustment Among Youth at Risk for Substance Use

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Introduction
- Youth sport participation may serve a protective function for youth, particularly those at risk for negative adjustment outcomes. (p. 386)
- Sport participation is positively correlated with:
  - Physical activity
  - Life skill development
  - Academic achievement
  - Social/emotional learning (Rhee et al., 2013)
- Sport may be an important context for prevention efforts.
- Importantly however, research also indicates that sport participation is associated with increased substance use (Kowal et al., 2004)

The current study aims to probe disparities in the literature between positive and negative impacts of sport participation.

Methods
- Data is from a longitudinal study of urban youth from the Eastern United States.
- Participants: 7th grade students who were participants in the middle school. (grades 6-8)
- Mean Age: 12.77 (SD = 0.37)
- Gender: Male (51.4%), Female (46.6%)
- Race: Black (63.3%), White (13.6%), Hispanic (10.1%)

Measures
- Youth self-reported in the following survey items annually:
  - Sport participation: dichotomous variable indicating involvement in a sport team at a school or in their neighborhood
  - Grade point average: sum of grades received in all subjects experienced by youth (range: 0-13)
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Results
- Stressful Life Events and Deviant Peer Associations
- Deviant Peer Association by Sport Participation

Discussion
- These findings support previous research linking sport participation and substance use.
- Sport participation:
  - Quote common for males
  - No differences in stressful life events or deviant peer associations
  - Less common for females
  - Athletes reported more stressful life events and deviant peers
**FYCS BY THE NUMBERS**

- 31 full-time faculty
- 1 faculty hired in 2019
- 6 full-time staff
- 1 part-time staff
- 5 Ph.D. students admitted fall, 2019
- 27 graduate students enrolled on campus
- 34 graduate students enrolled online
- 16 graduate certificate students enrolled online
- 320 undergraduate students enrolled
- 43,130 student service learning volunteer hours
- 22,875,200 external grant dollars (awards and sub awards)
FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR

The Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences (FYCS) is a dynamic place to be. Our academic programs, including our new Ph.D. program, continue to grow. Our faculty, staff and students continue to achieve success and recognition for their great work at the local, national and international levels. This past year, one of our faculty members became our first-ever Fulbright Scholar; one of our Ph.D. students won our first-ever graduate student teaching award; one of our undergraduate alums created a new academic scholarship; and one of our Extension programs celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

The dynamic nature of FYCS extends to its people as well. We have been fortunate to be able to hire another new faculty member, Dr. Kim Wiley, who is a former graduate of our undergraduate program and specializes in nonprofit leadership. We have admitted our third cohort of Ph.D. students, the five of whom started in fall, 2019. We have established our first ever departmental Advisory Board, composed of 13 members representing alumni, community leaders and stakeholder/partner organizations. And we are celebrating the retirement of four of our senior faculty members this year.

This is truly a great time to be part of FYCS. We have long been known as the “helping people” department. Now, we are taking our teaching, research and Extension programs to the next level, as we seek to create positive, lasting changes in our changing world.

Dr. Tracy Irani
Professor and Department Chair
FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Dr. Rose Barnett
Society for the Study of Emerging Adults (SSEA), Emeritus status

Aurora Brink
UF/IFAS, Superior Accomplishment Award for Administrative Excellence

Dr. Randy Cantrell
Florida Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, Health and Wellness Team Award, Homeflow Program, First Place
National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, National Housing Outreach Team Award, Homeflow Program, First Place
National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, Southern Regional Housing Outreach Team Award, Homeflow Program, First Place

Shannon Jackson
UF/IFAS, Superior Accomplishment Award for Community Service

Dr. Muthusami Kumaran
Fulbright Program, Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award
UF/IFAS, Superior Accomplishment Award for Diversity & Inclusion
UF/IFAS, University-Wide Superior Accomplishment Award for Diversity & Inclusion
Faculty Enhancement Opportunity Grant Award
Ramachandran-Ikeda International Award, for promoting youth development

Dr. Keith Diem
UF/IFAS, International Fellow Award

Dr. Victor Harris
North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture, Educator Award
National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, Innovation in Programming Award: Improving Relationships — SMART Couples Florida Project, 2019 National Team Award, Second Place
National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, Innovation in Programming Award: Improving Relationships — SMART Couples Florida Project, Southern Region Team Award, First Place
National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, Community Partnership Award, First Place in Florida, Third Place in Southern Region
National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, SNAP-Ed/EFNEP Educational Program Award, First Place in State, Second Place in Southern Region, Second Place in Nation
Office of Sustainability, University of Florida, EFNEP in Palm Beach County, Champions for Change Award Winner
National Extension Association of Family & Consumer Sciences, SNAP-Ed/EFNEP Educational Program Award, First Place in State
Association for Communication Excellence, Silver Award, EFNEP Cover
Association for Communication Excellence, Silver Award, EFNEP Pocket Folder
Leadership in Food and Physical Activity Questionnaire Workgroup, Certificate of Appreciation
Dr. Heidi Radunovich
Epsilon Sigma Phi, Florida Chapter, Specialist of the Year

Dr. Karla Shelnutt
UF/IFAS, High Impact Research Publication Award
State Program Leader for Nutrition in the UF/IFAS Extension Dean’s Office

Dr. Amy Simonne
Florida Association of Extension 4-H Agents, Outstanding Specialist award

L-R: Aurora Brink, Dr. Muthusami Kumaran, Shannon Jackson
Recepients of the UF/IFAS Superior Accomplishment Award, 2018
Undergraduate Scholarships
Bella Polley—Cole Slate
Laila Fakhoury—Cole Slate
Elizabeth Padilla—Faculty, Friends and Alumni

Certified Family Life Educator Certificate
Danielle Moore
Tatiana Bryan
Samantha Percifield

Honors Scholars
Samantha Dicorte, Chair: Dr. Candice Stefanou
Thesis Title: Emotional Intelligence, Ethical Decision-Making, and Happiness in College Students

Jessica Rojas, Chair: Dr. Jenny Jones
Thesis Title: Variation in Philanthropic Activity: Do Life Experiences and Sector of Employment Matter?

Tatiana Bryan, Chair: Dr. LaToya O’Neal
Thesis Title: The Mediterranean Diet and Its Influence on Mental Well-Being
2018–2019
Graduate Student Awards and Publications

Awards and Recognitions

Marilyn Little Altrusa Scholarship
Nana Adu
Lilliane Poincon

William C. and Bertha M. Cornett Fellowship
Katie Dorman
Melissa Fenton
Jacqlyn Yourell

North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) - Graduate Student Teaching Award
Katie Dorman

Academic Women’s Scholarship
Tara Mercurio

Selected Conferences, Presentations and Seminars


Dhar, B., & O’Neal, L. Financial strain and health behaviors among rural minorities. (2019, May). Presented at the National Rural Health Association Health Equity Conference, Atlanta, GA.


Yourell, J., Doty, J. (2019, April). Associations between weight-based bullying and developmental internal assets: Moderation by weight status. Presented at the University of Florida Graduate Student Research Symposium, Gainesville, FL.

**Publications**


Interview with FYCS’s Graduate Advisor, Gregg Henderschiedt
How would you describe your position as the Academic Advisor for the FYCS Graduate Programs?
I help both students and faculty with whatever they need to navigate the large and complicated world that is UF. I often serve as a communication clearinghouse for the academic regulations and procedures from the Graduate School, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and the Department. It’s a constantly changing roadmap, so keeping up with the latest is part of the fun.

What year did you come to UF?
2007, I began my career at UF in the Career Resource Center.

Briefly explain your background before coming to FYCS.
I have a master’s degree in counseling, and was a substance abuse counselor before going into higher ed. I was a mental health counselor, academic advisor, and career counselor before coming to FYCS.

What do you like most about working with students, both in your graduate advisory position and also as an instructor for undergraduates?
I love working with our graduate students because I get to know them first as prospective students and applicants and then get to see them through to graduation. It is such a privilege to see them grow, both academically and personally.

As for the undergraduate students I teach, career development is very much rooted in the future. I love talking to students in my class about their potential and how they can take concrete steps today to achieve their dreams of tomorrow.

What do you like most about working for FYCS?
I really appreciate that the department is focused on an academic discipline that addresses many of our society’s needs. It is hard not to feel good about being with a group of people (faculty, staff and students) who work together to heal the world in whatever way we can.

Talk about your affiliation with NAGAP.
I’ve been active for the past five years in NAGAP – The Association for Graduate Enrollment Management. I’ve learned so much from colleagues from across the country and applied it here in the department whenever possible. Since I’ve joined FYCS, I’ve attended every annual conference as well as two professional development institutes. The education sessions are fantastic, but I’ve learned even more from conversations with others in the field through my involvement with the conference planning committee and the education committee.

What do you like to do in your free time?
I love my free time and stay busy with any number of hobbies. I’m always trying to learn something new! In the past few years, I’ve learned how to knit and speak conversational Swedish. Who knows what I’ll take up next year!

I enjoy traveling, and I try to get abroad once a year. I have a special place in my heart for all things Scandinavian after studying abroad in Finland during college.

I love curling up with a good book, preferably with a cup of tea and a cat in my lap!

I’ve also taken up piano lessons after a 35-year hiatus. I was a little rusty, but I have enjoyed the challenge and recently performed in a local recital.
We have become a “Band-Aid” society—when a social problem crops up, such as the opioid crisis, the obesity epidemic, or increases in human trafficking, we try to patch it up on the back end instead of heading off the problem from the start. By looking at root causes of social problems early on, we can leverage prevention science to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Three of our faculty members with specialties in prevention science have teamed up to form a prevention science course that will be available in the Spring of 2020. The “Quest 2” course will be led by Dr. Jen Doty, Dr. Sarah Lynne, and Dr. LaToya O’Neal.

This interdisciplinary Quest 2 course will provide students with key foundational knowledge in prevention science. Topics covered will include:

1.) Background research to understand existing and emerging public health and well-being problems and to inform intervention development;

2.) Rigorous scientific standards for the development and evaluation of evidence-based prevention programs, practices, and policies (EBPs) in the areas of health care, social services, and education;

3.) The use of prevention science research to inform public policy and service systems at the national and local levels (e.g., health, education, child welfare, justice, drug and alcohol, and mental health systems); and

4.) Prevention research to reduce disparities, with a focus on understudied populations, inequality, and social justice. By reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors, it is possible to systematically reduce the major social problems of our time, including drug and alcohol abuse, obesity, youth violence and bullying, and sexually transmitted diseases.

All three faculty are excited to work together with FYCS students in the Spring.

“This class gives students a chance to apply scientific methods to issues they are passionate about, including health disparities, risk behaviors, and other health outcomes,” said Dr. Sarah Lynne.
Welcome Dr. Kim Wiley

Dr. Kimberly Wiley is an Assistant Professor of Nonprofit Management in the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences. She has a 60% teaching and 40% research appointment. She earned her doctorate from Florida State University in Public Administration with an emphasis on nonprofit organizations.

Dr. Wiley researches the relationship between nonprofit organizations and their public funders. She has a particular interest in domestic violence advocacy organizations serving families and youth. Dr. Wiley has published (or has articles forthcoming) in Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, Journal of Public Administration Education, and the Journal of Nonprofit Education and Leadership.

Before joining the faculty at UF, she served as Assistant Professor of Nonprofit Management in the Department of Public Administration at the University of Illinois Springfield where she coordinated the Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management. Dr. Wiley brings with her thirteen years of nonprofit experience in the field of victim advocacy in local, state, and national organizations. After serving in multiple capacities in three domestic violence shelters in Florida, she accepted a position with the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the statewide administrative organization for Florida’s 42 certified domestic violence centers. There she provided training and technical assistance to Florida’s domestic violence shelters and criminal justice systems.

Dr. Wiley is responsible for teaching courses in the Organizational Leadership for Nonprofits Minor, including FYC4409, Working with Nonprofits in Community Settings, FYC4622, Program Planning & Evaluation, and FYC4410, Fundraising.

Dr. Wiley has three current research projects. First, she leads a collaborative project examining how state-funded nonprofit organizations survived the 2015-2017 Illinois Budget Impasse. The team is using grounded theory and content analysis of interview and text data. Second, she is leading a team of graduate students to employ summative content analysis to historical documents representing the voices and behaviors within the Battered Women’s Movement from 1978 to 2019. They are examining the policy behavior and social action taken by a national advocacy coalition. Third, using textual analysis of film, Dr. Wiley worked with small groups of undergraduate students to identify and analyze television storylines about volunteering. Messages about voluntary action were interpreted to better understand public views of volunteering and what impact these perceptions may have on volunteer management.

Outside of the office, she enjoys exploring the local hiking trails with her large family and rambunctious dog.
Nontraditional FYCS graduate
Alicia Thomas gives back

Alicia Thomas earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Family, Youth and Community Sciences at the age of 52 in the spring of 2018.

“I entered the University of Florida in 2015 as a FYCS major at the age of 50, as a nontraditional, first generation student. During my studies, I discovered that I was not only studying the family dynamics of others, but, also studying my own family dynamics, which were often one and the same. It was through these studies that I began to walk the road to resilience, which was my pathway to a better relationship with my mom.”

Thomas’s mother, Drunella, passed away on May 2, 2019, having never graduated from high school, but she lived long enough to see her daughter graduate from UF.

She decided to create a scholarship for other minority, nontraditional students like herself.

“I was grief-stricken, and wanted to do something to honor her memory, so I decided to ‘send mom to college,’ while helping other minority, first-generation FYCS majors on their walk to resilience, in other words, being the person I never had,” Thomas said.

Thomas encourages others who may be thinking about earning a college degree at an unconventional age to not give up on the dream.

“Nontraditional students like Alicia bring a sense of wisdom to the classroom,” said Kathryn Ivey, Undergraduate Advisor for FYCS. “Having someone who has been in the workforce or raised a family provides a sense of encouragement to traditional students.”

The Drunella Maule Scholarship will be awarded to one or two first-generation, nontraditional students in the academic year 2020-21. Students will be selected based on their leadership and contributions to diversity in the student body and society and their sensitivity to society and campus racial, social, and ethnic issues.
Dr. Jennifer Doty is an Assistant Professor of youth development and prevention science in the Department of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences. Her research focuses on leveraging parent-child relationships and technology to promote adolescent health and well-being. Dr. Doty teaches FYC4622, Planning and Evaluation of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences Programs, FYC 3001, Principles of Family, Youth, and Community Sciences, and FYC 3112, Contemporary Family Problems and Interventions. She recently joined the board of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR), which directly supports our Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) certification track.

Talk about your new role with NCFR and what you plan to accomplish.

As the new professional representative on the board of NCFR, I will support both formal and informal mentoring opportunities for students and new professionals, contributing experience from my training in health equity leadership and mentoring. I will employ cross-platform communication to connect SNPs (students and new professionals) and build strong professional networks through NCFR discussion groups, webinars, Facebook posts, tweets and Twitter chats. I will coordinate with the board, the diversity and inclusion committee, the CFLE leadership, students, and new professionals to build SNP critical skills in areas such as basic and applied science, health disparities, administrative leadership, grant writing, and translational family science to prepare the next generation to promote family well-being.

What is your background with the CFLE?

When I learned how effective parent-based prevention is to improve outcomes for adolescents, becoming a CFLE was a natural choice to support my research agenda. Part of what a certified life educator does is provide evidence-based, family life education to promote prevention of negative youth outcomes.

Talk a little bit about your teaching and how CFLE plays a role in that.

I am passionate about prevention science, and I encourage students to learn about family life education as a means of preventive intervention to reduce family problems. In class we also discuss ways that family life education can be integrated into family policy. For example, we studied the “Family First” bill that provides support for family life education to reduce entry into the child welfare system.

Why would you encourage FYCS students to work towards their CFLE?

Family life education is a powerful prevention science tool, which is needed in our reactive, “Band-Aid” society. I encourage students to think about how becoming a CFLE may support their next career moves, such as becoming a counselor or social worker. Having a certification is a way that students can set themselves apart from the crowd when they go on interviews, and it gives them talking points about specific skills that they developed through their CFLE coursework.
Dr. Kumaran receives prestigious Fulbright Award
Dr. Muthusami Kumaran, FYCS Associate Professor of Nonprofit Management & Community Organizations, has just received the 2019-2020 Core Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award to South Korea. He becomes the first FYCS faculty to go abroad as a Fulbright U.S. Scholar representing FYCS, CALS, IFAS, UF & the U.S. This award further solidifies Dr. K’s international reputation as an expert and scholar in nonprofit/NGO management.

During his six-month Fulbright Award period (August 2019 – January, 2020) he will be hosted by the Jeju National University, Jeju Island, S. Korea. He will teach a graduate course entitled “Roles, Impacts & Operations of NGOs in Society” at JNU’s Department of Sociology; conduct research on South Korean environmental NGOs’ capacity building in collaboration with the World Environment & Island Studies Institute and Asia Climate Change Education Center; and train environmental NGO leaders in protecting the natural resources of the spectacular Island of Jeju (one of the New 7 Wonders of Nature: https://nature.new7wonders.com/wonders/jeju-island-korea-south/). Dr. K is no stranger to the academic and NGO communities in Jeju. He has been there nine times during the past eight years for invited lectures, keynote speeches for international conferences on climate change, and research. He also is currently serving his third term (since 2013) on the Global Environmental Advisory Council based on Jeju and appointed by its Governor.

His award letter, among other details, states “Your selection for a Fulbright award is an achievement for which you can be justly proud. As a Fulbright recipient and a representative of the United States, you will have the opportunity to work collaboratively with international partners in educational, political, cultural, economic, and scientific fields. In so doing, you will exemplify the qualities of service, leadership, and excellence that have been hallmarks of this Program for more than 70 years. We hope that your Fulbright experience will be deeply rewarding professionally and personally, and that you will share the knowledge you gain with many others throughout your life.”

FYCS Professor and Department Chair, Dr. Tracy Irani, writes, “We were all very excited to hear the news about Dr. Kumaran being selected for a Fulbright Award. This is a great achievement-getting a Fulbright is considered to be a very prestigious accomplishment. He has worked very hard for this. I know he will do well representing FYCS, IFAS and the university in the worldwide community of Fulbright Scholars.”

Dr. K says this about his Fulbright Scholarship: “This award is absolutely humbling as it fulfills a deeply personal quest of mine. From my humble beginnings in a small town in Southern India, I’ve come a long way in my life, scaled several personal and professional heights, and WILL continue to do so. But securing a Core Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award (the crown jewel of all Fulbright awards) is so very special because it has always been a dream career-pinnacle for me…and now it’s a reality! I couldn’t have done this without the unwavering support and encouragement of my wife Leela, our daughter Janani, FYCS Chair Dr. Tracy Irani, some colleagues here at UF, in South Korea, and across the Globe. JEJU ISLAND... HERE I COME (in 2019 Fall)!"
Active Learning Program: Dr. Randy Cantrell’s, “Making It On Your Own”

The Active Learning Program is a semester-long internship program that connects eager, well-trained students with UF faculty engaged in community-based research. Its goals are to:

- Advance UF faculty members’ community-based research projects
- Increase UF students’ professional skill sets and experiential education through classroom-based training and hand-on community engagement
- Help build a strong, sustainable community and campus

Students enroll in a semester-long, 3-credit internship course in which they receive three weeks of instruction and training to facilitate their community engagement.

Competency labs are provided to help students develop their research, communication, interpersonal, and professional skills. Students work directly with faculty mentors and community partners, advancing their community-based research project.

During Dr. Randy Cantrell’s Making It On Your Own (MIOYO) undergraduate internship, student interns received course credit for the semester-long effort by working at the Reichert House Youth Academy with at-risk youth. The students taught Dr. Cantrell’s curriculum for obtaining and maintaining a first time rental lease. They learned the curriculum—assisted in delivering it, facilitated students with classroom exercises and assisted in keeping students on task. They also assisted in collecting and analyzing data, and learning how and what the data meant and how they were to be used for research purposes.

Four interns received experience that could have not been received elsewhere, especially given that two of the four were international students, and all were women teaching in an all-male, low SES setting. “This demonstrates the bi-directional effect of the community-development education provided by the MIOYO program,” Cantrell said.

“MIOYO was my first experience with an internship and it made me feel more connected to my school (UF) and our community (Gainesville) than any other experience I had in my 4 years at UF. The MIOYO internship was one of the capstones of my time at UF and, to this day, Dr.C and I keep in touch.”

Shelby Lublin, FYCS graduate, 2018
UF’s Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences recognizes the value and importance of involving external stakeholders from appropriate fields (business and industry, government, education, community members, and others) in the development, delivery, and promotion of its collaborative credit and noncredit programs through program advisory boards. These groups provide a critical link between educators, students, and practitioners in the field in order to achieve program quality and relevance. The Advisory Board will work to support the mission of UF’s Department of Family Youth and Community Sciences, which is as follows:

The mission of the Family, Youth and Community Sciences Department is to enhance lifelong learning and the personal, social, economic and environmental well-being of diverse individuals, families and communities through state-of-the art Extension, research and teaching programs. Included in this mission are the following key elements:

To apply research-based information through innovative outreach programs.
To extend the frontiers of knowledge through research and other scholarly endeavors.
To build and enhance student competencies for successful careers.
To further advance the skills and knowledge of the department’s faculty members through continued education and professional development.

The first advisory board meeting was held in late September and was a great success.
Advisory board members are as follows:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Jose Alvarez</td>
<td>College Success Coach</td>
<td>Education Foundation of Alachua County</td>
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<td>Na talya Bannister</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Pace Center for Girls</td>
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<td>Tina Certain</td>
<td>School Board Member</td>
<td>Alachua County School Board</td>
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<td>Sophia Cooney</td>
<td>State 4-H Volunteer Coordinator</td>
<td>UF/IFAS</td>
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<td>Maria Eunice</td>
<td>Food &amp; Nutrition Services Program Director</td>
<td>Alachua County School Board</td>
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<td>Nicole Gomez</td>
<td>Postdoctoral Associate</td>
<td>UF Law, Center for Study of Race/Race Relations</td>
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<td>Diedre Houchen</td>
<td>Asst. Director of Development</td>
<td>UF/IFAS Advancement</td>
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<td>Taylor Johnson</td>
<td>President &amp; CEO</td>
<td>Comm. Foundation of North Central Florida</td>
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<td>Barzella Papa</td>
<td>Regional Planner/Manager</td>
<td>UF Law, Center for Study of Race/Race Relations</td>
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<td>Stephen Pennypacker</td>
<td>Regional Planner/Manager</td>
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<td>Janet Romero</td>
<td>Retired Assoc. Emeritus</td>
<td>Partnership for Strong Families</td>
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<td>Director of Accreditation</td>
<td>Florida DCF</td>
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<td>Adriene Tynes</td>
<td>Director - Ed. and Prevention</td>
<td>FYCS</td>
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<td>Jessica Williams</td>
<td>Director - Ed. and Prevention</td>
<td>Nonprofits First in Palm Beach County, Florida</td>
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FYCS welcomes third cohort in Youth Development and Family Sciences (YDFS) Ph.D. Program

Emily Davison

I was born and raised in central Florida. Although I completed my bachelor’s degree in psychology out of state, I felt that it was ideal to come home to Florida for graduate school. Between undergrad and graduate school I took two years to be the administrator of a non-profit in central Florida that focused on providing opportunities for young adults with developmental disabilities after they were out of school. I have always loved my time with individuals with disabilities, and they have heavily influenced my perspective and my work. I am passionate about conducting quality research that informs policy and can improve the lives of individuals in my community. My research uses a developmental focus to explore the intersections of vulnerabilities for adolescents with the hope of identifying areas to empower them and prevent a variety of negative outcomes like involvement with the juvenile justice system. I have worked with youth in juvenile detention centers, and their voices have inspired much of my work. I completed my master’s degree in Family, Youth, and Community Science at UF. I love to explore Gainesville with my husband and rescue dogs. We love to hike, bike, and spend time on the water.

Liva LaMontagne

Liva earned her Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Doctoral degree in Psychology at the University of Latvia, specializing in Social/Organizational Psychology. While facilitating relationship skills workshops at UF/IFAS Extension, she discovered the wide-spread need and practical usefulness of brief mindfulness practices to reduce stress and enhance well-being in adults in relationships, especially working parents.

As a working mom who has experienced stressful life events, she wants to help all stressed, working parents create the best versions of themselves through mindful coping with the multiple demands on their lives. She seeks to apply her previous experience studying employee well-being in work contexts to better understanding positive human development at the work/life interface. She is also interested in brief mindfulness interventions that enhance students’ well-being and academic success, and mindfulness in the contexts of couple relationship quality and leadership development.
Aaron Ganas

Before moving to Gainesville in 2016, Aaron received a BA in Theatre Arts from Catawba College and an MPA in Public and Nonprofit Management and Policy from New York University. Having worked with numerous youth-serving nonprofits, Aaron discovered an interest in working to align programmatic outcomes with organizational intentions. He is interested in applied research related to planning and evaluating interventions that support positive youth development. When not working on the Youth Development and Family Sciences PhD, Aaron can either be found at his day job as an Academic Advisor in the College of Education or at home hanging out with his wife, daughter, and their itchy dog.

Selena Garrison

In 2008, I completed my undergraduate studies with dual BS degrees in FYCS and Psychology from the University of Florida. In 2010, I also completed my Master’s studies with a MS in FYCS.

As a biological, foster and adoptive parent, my background in youth development through both FYCS and Psychology has played an integral role in how I work with children, both in my home and in the child welfare system. I am thrilled to be joining the Youth Development and Family Sciences Ph.D. Program as I strive to make a broader impact for children across Florida and the United States. My research interests are in the areas of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), specifically related to the child welfare system and youth in foster care. My research will concentrate on intervention strategies for caregivers of children from hard places, as well as best practices for policy related to child welfare.

Yong Liu

My educational background includes a Bachelor of Finance, and Master’s degree in Agricultural Economics Management. Pursuing a doctorate degree is the most crucial element in realizing the dream of academic success. I believe a doctorate in Family, Youth and Community Science at the University of Florida is an excellent choice to provide me with the tools for academic excellence in this next academic step. I am impressed with the University of Florida’s rigorous curriculum and faculty, and I am certain that this program fits my research interests. I have refined my research interests to the impacts of climate change on agriculture practice, especially on smallholders in China. Furthermore, proper mitigation and adaption measures might alleviate the impacts of climate change on household welfare, thus I want to do some research about this topic and focus on estimating the specific effects. Besides, I am also interested in family decision-making, especially the smallholders’ practice decisions and behavior economics based on the aspects of psychology.