

Sharon Sassler

Web Bio

Information

Biography

Biographical Statement

Sharon Sassler is Associate Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University. She received her Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University in 1995. She has taught at Wellesley College, Hunter College (CUNY), and The Ohio State University. She joined the Cornell faculty in 2005.

A social demographer, Sassler's research examines factors shaping the activities of young adults and their life course transitions into school and work, relationships, and parenthood, and how these transitions vary by gender, race/ethnicity, and social class. Some current projects explore the tempo of relationship progression, the processes underlying entrance into cohabiting unions, and the meanings cohabitators assign to their unions. She has also examined outcomes associated with becoming an unmarried mother (for mothers and their young adult offspring), and the impact of subsequent entrance into unions (marriage or cohabitation). Her most recent collaboration examines how family expectations and experiences shape the retention and promotion of women in science and technology careers.

Professional

Current Professional Activities

Sassler is involved with the Cornell Population Center (CPC), and is an active member of the Population Association of America (PAA), the American Sociological Association (ASA), and the Eastern Sociological Society (ESS). She served a three year term on the Executive Committee of the ESS (2007-2010); during that time, she chaired the Candace Rogers Student Paper award (2010), and chaired the Mirra Komarovsky Book Award (2009) for the ESS. She also regularly organizes sessions for the PAA and ASA meetings, and has participated on the PAA program committee.

Sassler is a founding member of the Work and Family Researchers Network. She also is currently a team member of the Institute for Social Sciences Project on Immigration, titled "Settlement, Integration, and Membership" (2010-2013).

Research

Current Research Activities

Sassler has published extensively on topics relating to family formation and change, including studies of union formation (cohabitation, marriage) and the progression of romantic and sexual relationships, marriage among single mothers (both divorced and never married), and immigrant adaptation.

Her recent research projects examine how union formation and childbearing are associated with health and well-being, occupational attainment and job turn-over, and relationship quality. For example, she is currently involved in a collaborative project to assess the midlife health of unmarried mothers and the outcomes associated with entrance into marital or cohabiting unions. This project also examines how age at childbearing shapes health outcomes in mid-life, and various measures of well-being for the offspring of unmarried mothers, such as their health, educational attainment, and early childbearing. A second funded project examines the occupational choices of women and men who majored in STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), exploring how family expectations, attitudes, and behaviors differentiates the occupational choice and retention of women and men.

Another stream of Sassler's research utilizes qualitative methods, specifically in-depth interviews with over 60 cohabiting couples (with partners interviewed separately) to better understand the processes involved with relationship progression and advancement, decisions about parenting and marriage, and how couples negotiate housework and paid work. This research reassesses the role that cohabitation serves in the family formation processes of contemporary young Americans. A particular emphasis is the important role that social class plays in differentiating the relationship processes of today's young adults. Additional research, drawing on nationally representative data sources, further extends the insights drawn from the qualitative research, exploring the tempo of relationship progression and its association with how partners assess the quality of their relationship.

Extension

Education

Education

1995-96. Post-Doctoral Fellowship, Johns Hopkins University, Department of Population Dynamics.

1995. Ph.D. Brown University. Sociology/Demography

1991. MA Brown University. Sociology/Demography

1984. BA Brandeis University. English & American Literature, Politics.

Courses

Courses Taught

PAM 2150: Research Methods

PAM 3360: Evolving Families: Challenges to Public Policy

PAM 3370: Racial and Ethnic Differentiation (Now Race and Public Policy)

Websites

Administration

Publications

Selected Publications

Amanda J. Miller, Sharon Sassler, and Dela Kus-Appouh. 2011. "The Specter of Divorce: Views from Working- and Middle-Class Cohabitators." *Family Relations*, 60(5):602-616.

Sharon Sassler and Kara Joyner. 2011. "Social Exchange and the Progression of Sexual Relationships in Emerging Adulthood." *Social Forces*. 90(1):223-245.

Kristi Williams, Sharon Sassler, Adrienne Frech, Fenaba Addo, and Elizabeth Cooksey. 2011. "Single Mothers, Union History, and Health at Midlife." *American Sociological Review* 76(3):465-486.

Sharon Sassler and Amanda J. Miller. 2011. "Waiting to Be Asked: Gender, Power, and Relationship Progression among Cohabiting Couples." *Journal of Family Issues*, 32(4):482-506.

Sharon Sassler and Amanda J. Miller. 2011. "Class Differences in Cohabitation Processes." *Family Relations*, 60(2):163-177.

Sharon Sassler and Amanda J. Miller. 2010. "Class Differences in Women's Family and Work Behaviors." *Journal of Civil Rights and Social Justice*. 16(2):349-367.

Amanda J. Miller and Sharon Sassler. 2010. "Stability and Change in the Division of Labor among Cohabiting Couples." *Sociological Forum*, 25(4):677-701. [\[paper\]](#)

Fenaba Addo and Sharon Sassler. 2010. "Financial Arrangements and Relationship Quality among Low-Income Couples." *Family Relations*, 59(4):408-423.

Sharon Sassler, Fenaba Addo, and Elizabeth Hartmann. 2010. "The Tempo of Relationship Progression among Low-Income Couples." *Social Science Research*. 39(5):831-844. [\[paper\]](#)

Daniel T. Lichter, Richard N. Turner, and Sharon Sassler. 2010. "National Estimates of the Rise in Serial Cohabitation." *Social Science Research*. 39(5):754-765. [\[paper\]](#)

Sharon Sassler. 2010. "Partnering Across the Life Course: Sex, Relationships, and Mate Selection." *Journal of Marriage and Family*.

72(3):557-575.