

Doctoral Minor In Family Psychology
Department of Counseling and Education Psychology
Indiana University

Family Psychology is one of the recognized specialty areas of practice in Professional Psychology, as designated by the American Psychological Association and as represented by the Society for Family Psychology (Division 43 of APA). Family Psychology is an approach to understanding human functioning and treating problems that is based on general systems theory. The premise of practice in this specialty is that family dynamics play a vital role in the psychological functioning of family members. This applies to extended families as well as nuclear families. The practice of family psychology takes into consideration as well the family's history and current environment (e.g., family history, ethnic culture, community, school, health care system, and other relevant sources of support or difficulty). Family psychologists strive to understand issues presented by persons to be served not only from the perspective of the presenter(s) but as well through understanding the contexts in which these issues have developed.

The Minor in Family Psychology is a joint one between members of the Counseling Psychology and the Human Development Programs in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology at Indiana University. The purpose of the minor is two fold: Develop knowledge of family systems in order to impact researchers and educators by expanding their focus to include the “family perspective,” and, to provide a set of organized knowledge and learning opportunities for practitioners that builds on the core practices of counseling to include the specialty of family psychology. Because the minor is intended to reach many different audiences, it has a common core with two potential themes from which to select. The minor is intended to meet the needs of students who seek an organized course of study in an area that is not available from any one program at Indiana University. Doctoral students focusing on family psychology in Counseling Psychology, Human Development, School Psychology or any other associated area may take the minor. Currently there is no organized course of study in this area in any area at Indiana University. It is important to note that although the doctoral programs providing courses for the minor, Counseling Psychology and Human Development, are in the same department, they are separate programs. For example, students majoring in one program, may minor in the other. While the course in the minor may be in the same program or department as the student's major they are not available any where except in this department. Furthermore, these courses are not typically part of a student's major course of study. Finally, the minor is important for counseling students in that it will allow them to take an organized course of study in the area and it will prepare them to apply for Board Certification once they graduate. Without an organized minor in the area of Family Psychology, students will not be eligible this important clinical practice designation.

The minor consists of 12 credits.

All students take two courses from the Counseling and Educational Psychology department which form the common core focusing on family systems from research and applied perspectives. The two courses are:

1. **Educ-P625** Family Processes and Child/Adolescent Development (3 credits - spring odd numbered years)
2. **Educ-G568** Advanced Marital and Family Therapy (3 credits - Fall in even numbered years)

Students select courses for the remaining 6 credits based on two themes:

A. Researcher/Educator. This theme is aimed at educating those who may enter an academic or research career. The courses are oriented to obtaining a systems view that may serve as the foundation for the current family psychology oriented research techniques and approaches. Dr. Sexton is the minor advisor for this theme.

B. Practitioner/Research. This theme is aimed a building on the family psychology knowledge to incorporate the unique and specialized methods of practicing family psychology. Dr. Stright is the minor advisor for this theme.

Approved Family Psychology Minor Courses for both Themes

Counseling and Educational Psychology Department Courses

Educ-P516 Adolescent Development

Educ-G567 Introduction Marital and Family Therapy

Educ-G624 section 2 Practicum in Family Psychology Practice

Educ-G510 Introduction to Alcohol & Drug Counseling

Courses from other departments focusing on family psychology may also be counted if approved by the minor advisor. For example, possible courses that could be counted for the minor from the psychology department are:

Psy-P657 Topical Seminar - Psychobiology of Parental Behavior

Psy-P657 Topical Seminar - Development and Psychopathology

Psy-P657 Topical Seminar - Consequences of Divorce and Interventions

Contributing Faculty

The Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology is unique in that it has a collection of faculty who are experts in the Family Psychology Field. In the Development area, Dr. Anne Stright and Dr. Mary Waldron are experts in the study and understanding of family processes and development. Dr. Thomas Sexton is a Diplomat in Family Psychology (ABPP), former president of the Society for

Family Psychology (Division 43 of APA), and has also published extensively in the current treatment approaches and research in the area of family psychology. This core group and other interested faculty will coordinate the minor collaboratively.

Need

As a recognized specialty, Family Psychology is of increasing interest to students who come to do their graduate education at Indiana University. The faculty noted above already draws many students to become interested in coming to the Counseling Psychology and Development programs. Unfortunately, there is no organized and formal course of study for these students to pursue. Currently 3-4 students each year create an “interdisciplinary” minor in order to create the minor described above. With a specially titled, recognized minor course of study, more students will be attracted to graduate programs at Indiana, students will have an organized course of study that can be represented on their program of studies, and those who complete the minor will have enhanced job opportunities. Finally, such a minor would enhance the reputation of the Department and School by becoming a leader in this specialty field.