



Family Division Newsletter

Society for the Study of Social Problems
Editor: Ebonie Cunningham Stringer, PhD

Fall 2006

IN THIS ISSUE

FROM THE DESK OF OUR DIVISION CHAIR.....1
 INFO ON THE 2006 STUDENT PAPER COMPETITIONS AND OUTSTANDING
 SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS SPONSORED BY THE FAMILY DIVISION.....2
 SHARING OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS: Learn What Important Contributions Division
 Members are Making to Their Fields.....2
 "RESOLVING THE BOY CRISIS IN SCHOOLS" BY JEFFERY M. LEVING AND GLEN
 SACKS3
 CONFERENCE INFORMATION.....5

From the Desk of our Division Chair

Dear Family Division Members,

I hope everyone is having a productive and calm fall. Even though August 2006 and August 2007 seem far away, I'd like to take a few moments to reflect upon both months.



Family Division post-meeting gathering. From left to right: Melanie Carlson, Cheryl Boudreaux, E. Brooke Kelly, Orly Benjamin, Ebonie Cunningham Stringer, and Nancy Mezey. Photo taken by Michelle Janning.

The SSSP meeting during this past August in Montreal was great. The Family Division held several terrific sessions, which I hope you were able to attend. We also had a great showing at the Family Division meeting. We're thrilled to have new people willing to organize sessions and take on division responsibilities. After the meeting, several of us decided to have a post-division meeting gathering at the conference hotel. If you missed this year's meeting, please join us next year. We promise to make it fun!

In thinking about next August, I would like to bring to your attention the sessions the Family Division is sponsoring and/or co-sponsoring for the SSSP meetings, August 10-12, 2007 at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City. Next year's theme is "Research Matters: Creating Knowledge, Policy, and Justice." The deadline for submission is January 31, 2007.

Please submit your work for consideration and also circulate the list of sessions widely so we can increase the pool of submissions. You can visit SSSP's website (<http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/267>) for specific information about how and where to make a submission. Also, see the section on Conference Information below for more details about submissions.

I'm looking forward to an exciting and productive year. Please contact me directly (nmezey@monmouth.edu) if you have questions and/or concerns.

Respectfully,

Nancy J. Mezey
Division Chair

2006 STUDENT PAPER COMPETITIONS AND
OUTSTANDING SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Sponsored by the Family Division of the Society for the Study of Social Problems

Deadline: 2/1/06

The Family Division announces its 2006 Graduate Student Paper Competition. Papers should be of professional quality and may relate to any aspect of sociology of the family. Authors should be currently enrolled as graduate students, or individuals who received their Ph.D.'s in May 2005 or later. To be eligible, a paper may not be published, accepted, or under review for publication. Papers that have been presented at a professional meeting or submitted for presentation at a professional conference are eligible. Papers must be student-authored; they can be authored by one or more students, but may not be co-authored with a faculty member or non-student. Papers should be no more than 35 pages in length, including all notes, references, and tables. Send papers and a cover letter specifying that the paper is to be considered for the Family Division Graduate Student Paper Competition to: Dr. Cheryl Boudreaux, Sociology Department, Grand Valley State University, 2161 AuSable Hall, 1 Campus Drive, Allendale, MI 49401-9403. Alternatively, papers may be sent electronically to Dr. Boudreaux at: boudreac@gvsu.edu. The winner and any runners-up will be announced in spring 2006. The winner(s) will receive a modest cash stipend, registration fees, and an opportunity to present her/his paper at the SSSP conference, held in August 2006 in Montreal.

SHARING OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Please take the time to review our members' recent publications and accomplishments. We hope that you will consider making them a part of your personal library, incorporating them into your course syllabi, or your applied work.

E. Brooke Kelly. *forthcoming*. "The Work of Coordinating Child Care for Rural Low-Income Mothers." in *Child Poverty in America Today, vol. 3*, edited by Barbara A. Arrighi and David J. Maume. Praeger.

Single by Chance, Mothers by Choice: How Women Are Choosing Parenthood Without Marriage and Creating the New American Family by Rosanna Hertz (Oxford University Press, October 2006)

Description: A remarkable number of women today are taking the daunting step of having children outside of marriage. In *Single By Chance, Mothers By Choice*, Rosanna Hertz offers the first full-scale account of this fast-growing phenomenon, revealing why these middle class women took this unorthodox path and how they have managed to make single parenthood work for them. Hertz interviewed 65 women--ranging from physicians and financial analysts to social workers, teachers, and secretaries—women who speak candidly about how they manage their lives and families as single mothers. What Hertz discovers are not ideologues but reluctant revolutionaries, women who--whether straight or gay--struggle to conform to the conventional definitions of mother, child, and family. Having tossed out the rulebook in order to become mothers, they nonetheless adhere to time-honored rules about child-rearing. As they tell their stories, they shed light on their paths to motherhood, describing how they summoned up the courage to pursue their dream, how they broke the news to parents, siblings, friends, and co-workers, how they went about buying sperm from fertility banks or adopting children of different races. They recount how their personal and social histories intersected to enable them to pursue their dream of motherhood, and how they navigate daily life. What does it mean to be 'single' in terms of romance and parenting? How do women juggle earning a paycheck with parenting? What creative ways have women devised to shore up these families? How do they incorporate men into their child-centered families? This book provides concrete, informative answers to all these questions. This book also includes an epilogue which updates the women's stories.

Sweeney, Kathryn A. 2006. "The Blame Game: Racialized Responses to Hurricane Katrina, *DuBois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 3,1: 161-174.

DuBois Review is edited by Lawrence D. Bobo and Michael C. Dawson. This special Katrina issue features analysis by distinguished scholars from a variety of disciplines, who provide provocative insight into the disaster's meaning and implications for American culture, the state of democracy, and the world. Articles include discussions of the politics of color blindness, trends in poverty and antipoverty policy, racial inequality, reactions of blacks and whites to the government's response to Hurricane Katrina and to the plight of the storm's victims, racial apathy, the impact of the hurricane on black women in New Orleans, U.S. public opinion regarding poverty and race, and much more.

Resolving the Boy Crisis in Schools

By Jeffery M. Leving and Glenn Sacks

A recent Chicago Board of Education report showed that girls enjoy a 63-37% advantage over boys in gaining admittance to Chicago's eight selective-enrollment college prep high schools. In response, Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan and top administrators at Jones, Whitney Young and Brooks prep schools are advocating that schools consider "gender weighting." Yet to balance the scales by employing admissions preferences is misguided. What's needed instead is a rethinking of the way we educate, beginning at the earliest levels.

Many healthy, energetic, intelligent boys are branded as having behavior problems as soon as they begin school, and are punished and put on Ritalin or other drugs so they will sit still. Little thought is given to two obvious questions: How could a six or seven year-old be "bad"? And how could so many boys need drugs to function in school? Because schools and classrooms do not fit their educational needs, many boys disengage from school long before they ever reach the prep school level.

Many modern educational practices are counterproductive for boys. Success in school is tightly correlated with the ability to sit still, be quiet and complete paperwork and assignments, which are sometimes of questionable value. A “get tough” mentality—under which teachers give excessive homework lest they appear uncommitted or weak—has become a substitute for educators actually having a sound reason for assigning all the work they assign.

Many young boys are bodily kinesthetic learners who respond to hands-on lessons. The educational establishment finds this inconvenient, and thus largely ignores it.

The trend against competition and the promotion of cooperative learning strategies run counter to boys' natural competitiveness and individual initiative. Lessons in which there are no right or wrong answers, and from which solid conclusions cannot be drawn, tend to frustrate boys, who often view them as pointless.

Efforts to make schools gentler and to promote women's writing, while understandable, have pushed aside the action and adventure literature, which boys have treasured for generations. In their place are subtle, reflective works, which often hold little interest for boys.

The dearth of male teachers--particularly at the elementary level, where female teachers outnumber male teachers six to one--is a problem for boys. The average teacher is a well-meaning and dedicated woman who always did well in school and can't quite understand why the boys won't sit still, be quiet and do their work like the girls do. Instead, boys need strong, charismatic teachers who mix firm discipline with an understanding and good-natured acceptance of boyish energy. And though it's rarely mentioned, most teachers are weighed down by paperwork and secretarial labor, which limits the time they can spend planning creative, hands-on, boy-friendly lessons.

Recess and physical education time allotted during the day are insufficient for boys' needs, and the trend has been to reduce this time rather than to increase it. Pervasive fear of lawsuits has turned educators into guards vigilant to prevent any manifestation of natural boyishness outside the classroom from becoming the school district's latest legal settlement payout.

The deterioration of vocational education also hurts boys. U.S. Department of Education data show that these programs suffered a sharp decline from 1982 to 1992 and never recovered. Vocational classes once started low and middle achieving boys on the path to careers as skilled tradesmen. They have now often been replaced by an asinine yet pervasive mantra that defines as successful only those who go to college and become doctors or lawyers. This mantra often disrespects boys' blue collar fathers, who also happen to be their primary role models. In fact, to suggest that a boy pursue a career working with his hands leaves a teacher open to charges of harming students by encouraging low expectations.

The boy crisis in our schools is more than an educational crisis—it is also a significant public health issue. Nearly nine million prescriptions of Ritalin are written for American children each year, most of them for boys between the ages of six and 12. According to a federal expert advisory panel, 10% of 10 year-old American boys are on Ritalin or similar drugs. In February the panel, which reviewed several dozen reports of deaths, heart problems, and toxic reactions associated with these drugs, recommended they carry a prominent 'black box' warning, the strongest warning for prescription drugs.

The gender weighting currently being pondered by Chicago's educational establishment wouldn't begin to solve these problems. Nor would it address the wide gender disparities that exist among low and middle achieving students. Boys don't need admissions preferences—they need a system which meets their educational needs.

Jeffery M. Leving is one of America's most prominent family law attorneys. He is the author of the book Fathers' Rights: Hard-hitting and Fair Advice for Every Father Involved in a Custody Dispute. His website is www.dadsrights.com.

Conference Information:

Just a few points to keep in mind: This year, papers or extended abstracts (2-3 page summary of the intended presentation) for presentations at division sponsored sessions **MUST be sent electronically via our online submission cover sheet** to session organizers no later than midnight (EST) on January 31, 2007. You may review the online submission form at the following: <http://www.sssp1.org/index.cfm/m/268> . Please note that authors may not submit the same paper or extended abstract to more than one session organizer with this form.

FAMILY DIVISION SPONSORED SESSIONS

Session 1: In-Vitro to Video Games: Families, Children, and Technology - **THEMATIC**
Organizer: Michelle Janning

Session 2: Criminal Justice and Families
Organizer: Ebonie Cunningham

Session 3: Families and Religion
Organizer: Melanie Heath

FAMILY DIVISION CO-SPONSORED SESSIONS

Session 33: Institutional Ethnographic Research for Families and Schools - **THEMATIC**
(Family and Institutional Ethnography)
Organizer: Alison I. Griffith

Session 34: Same-Sex Marriage Across Borders (Family and Law and Society)
Organizer: Melanie Heath

Session 35: Camouflaging Sexual Behavior and Families (Family; Law and Society; and Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities)
Organizer: Cheryl Boudreaux

Session 36: Making Privilege Visible: Employment, Families, and Poverty (Family and Poverty, Class, and Inequality)
Organizer: Orly Benjamin

Session 37: Families across the Lifespan (Family and Youth, Aging, and the Life Course)
Organizer: Heather Dillaway and Nancy Mezey