



Family Division Newsletter

Society for the Study of Social Problems

Fall 2005

IN THIS ISSUE:

FROM THE DESK OF OUR DIVISION CHAIR	1
SHARING OUR SUCCESS: <i>Learn What Important Contributions</i> <i>Division Members are Making to their Fields.....</i>	2
CONFERENCE INFORMATION.....	3

FROM THE DESK OF OUR DIVISION CHAIR

Dear Family Division Members,

As I embark on my term as Chair of the Family Division, I want to thank Michelle Janning for her excellent leadership during the past two years and Ebonie Cunningham for putting together this newsletter. I also want to thank all the members who contributed to the success of the Family Division’s sessions at the 2005 meeting in Philadelphia. I was very impressed with all the sessions I attended and look forward to the meetings in Montreal.

I want to take a few moments to introduce myself, reflect on the importance of our work, and inform you of the exciting sessions that the Family Division is sponsoring in the 2006 meetings. I am an Assistant Professor of Sociology and Coordinator of the Sociology Program at Monmouth University in New Jersey. I have training and interests in family sociology, gender studies, multiracial feminism, sexualities, and African studies. For me, SSSP has been a welcoming and exciting organization; welcoming in that it nurtures both fledgling and seasoned scholars from a wide variety of backgrounds, and exciting because of its focus on cutting-edge scholarship, advocacy, and policy. As a family sociologist, I think this combination is crucial – to be able to conduct research on the ever changing issues concerning families, to advocate for a position, and to influence policy in order to positively affect families around the world. As the academic year began with Hurricane Katrina washing away the thin veneer that often hides racial and class inequalities from the view of privileged groups, as we witnessed the disaster of the earthquake in Pakistan, as the war in Iraq continues to ravage Iraqi families and the families of the members of the U.S. military, and as we see a persistent push around the U.S. to systematically deny lesbians and gays the right to legally unite their families through the institution of marriage, I have been continually impressed with the scholarship our members present, the works we publish, and the efforts we make to influence family policy. Our work could not be more critical than it is at this historical moment. I am very proud to be chairing such a wonderful and important division.

As we work on producing new scholarship and gear up for the 2006 meetings, I would like to bring to your attention the sessions that the Family Division is sponsoring and/or co-sponsoring (see the section on Conference Information below). 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/>) for specific information about how and where to make a submission. The deadline for submissions is January 31, 2006.

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

Respectfully,

Nancy J. Mezey
Division Chair

SHARING OUR SUCCESS

Many of our division members are making important contributions to their fields. These successes are evidenced by the impact that they are making in academia and the community. If you would like to share information about your recent accomplishments with other division members, please contact Ebonie Cunningham (elcunin@purdue.edu).

Coles, Roberta L. 2005. *Race & Family: A Structural Approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

In *Race & Family: A Structural Approach* (2005), author Roberta L. Coles looks at ethnic minority families in a novel way – through a structural lens. Unlike many texts on race and family, this textbook offers an approach that illustrates overarching structural factors affecting all families rather than examining each ethnicity in isolation. By focusing on various structural factors such as demographic, economic, and historical aspects, this book analyzes various family trends in a cross-cutting manner to exemplify the similarities and distinctions among all racial and ethnic groups.

Roberta L. Coles, Associate Professor of Sociology, Marquette University

Harris, Scott R. 2006. *The Meanings of Marital Equality*. SUNY Press (in print December 2005).

This new book develops a constructionist approach to studying equality and inequality by synthesizing the theoretical perspectives of four founding figures in interactionist thought: Herbert Blumer, Alfred Schutz, Harold Garfinkel, and John Dewey. The author uses this approach as he examines the stories people tell about their equal and unequal marriages and as he compares those tales to what researchers have had to say on the subject. Harris demonstrates that marital scholars (and social scientists in general) tend to impose interpretations of equality and inequality onto their respondents' lives rather than respecting and studying the meanings that people live by.

Schmalzbauer, Leah. 2005. *Striving and Surviving: A Daily Life Analysis of Honduran Transnational Families*. Routledge.

Sociologists and anthropologists have focused considerable attention on contemporary transnational flows of capital, labor and culture, as well as on the ways in which communities create and maintain transnational ties. However very few have studied the specific role of the family in transnational processes and fewer still have looked at how families actually function in a transnational space. In this book the author addresses this gap in the literature by investigating how transnationalism impacts and structures daily family life and works as a survival strategy in which families use the difference in living costs between Honduras and the United States to support household consumption. Drawing on data gathered in Honduras and the United States from one-week time diaries, in-depth interviews, participant observation and interpretive focus groups, the author looks specifically at the experience and prospects of transmigrant labor in the United States; the aspirations and consumption practices of transnational family members in the United States and Honduras, especially as they relate to the American Dream; and she explores the ways in which families negotiate caretaking responsibilities, both financial and emotional, while striving and surviving in a transnational space. This is the first daily life study of undocumented immigrants and the first transnational analysis of Honduran families. It is part of the Routledge series, *New Approaches In Sociology*, edited by Nancy Naples.

Leah Schmalzbauer, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Montana State University

Kelly, E. Brooke. 2005. "Leaving and Losing Jobs: Resistance of Rural Low-Income Mothers," *Journal of Poverty: Innovations on Social, Political, and Economic Inequalities*. 9 (1): 83-103.

The expanding service economy demands an increasing supply of low-wage workers who, increasingly, are women and racial minorities. At the same time that women are being pulled into these low-paying and often inflexible and unstable jobs, reforms in the welfare system have removed the economic safety net for many women and children. This paper relies on in-depth interviews with rural low-income mothers in a mid-western state to examine the importance of the context of working conditions in shaping job turnover. In the often brittle and unyielding conditions of the low-wage, primarily service work available in one rural county, "breaks" either by quitting or losing a job are not an uncommon occurrence. I argue that within the context of these low-wage service jobs, which offer employees little autonomy, quitting may be one of the only forms of resistance available to workers.

E. Brooke Kelly, Assistant Professor of Sociology, University of North Carolina--Pembroke

Mezey, Nancy J. 2005. "Conducting Multiracial Feminist Family Research: Challenges and Rewards of Recruiting a Diverse Sample," *Michigan Family Review* 10: 45-65.

In a special issue of the *Michigan Family Review* titled "Feminism & Family Life" edited by Maxine Baca Zinn and Heather E. Dillaway, Mezey's paper discusses the importance of conducting feminist family research grounded in multiracial feminism. The author describes how a diverse group of lesbians decided to become mothers or remain childfree and illustrates challenges, overcoming challenges, and rewards in recruiting such a sample. The article discusses selecting a research method, definitions, insider/outsider status, power, and sampling strategies. Despite difficulties, the rich findings make the recruiting effort worthwhile because it expands our understanding of families.

Conference Information

Below is a list of the Family Division sponsored and co-sponsored sessions. Please visit SSSP's website (<http://www.sssp1.org/>) for specific information about how and where to make a submission. The deadline for submissions is January 31, 2006.

FAMILY DIVISION SPONSORED SESSIONS

Session I: Families in Diverse Communities - **THEMATIC**

Session II: Family Policy

Session III: Domesticity and Division of Labor

FAMILY DIVISION CO-SPONSORED SESSIONS

Session: Gender and Sexual Violence (with Crime and Juvenile Delinquency Division and the Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities Division)

Session: Changing Family Structure and Drugs (with Drinking and Drugs Division)

Session: Families in Global Perspectives (with Global Division)

Session: Families and Criminal Justice (with Law and Society Division)

Session: Same-Sex Marriage Across Borders (with Law and Society Division and the Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities Division)

Session: Transgender in Families, Communities, and Law (with Law and Society Division and the Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities Division)

Session: Work, Family, and Social Class (with Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division)

Session: Families Across the Lifespan (with Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division)

Session: Threats to Academic Freedom: Academic Freedom and the Commercial Juggernaut in Canadian Universities (with Institutional Ethnography Division and the Standards and Freedom of Research, Publication, and Teaching Committee)

The 2006 SSSP's annual meeting will be held in Montreal, Quebec, Canada (August 10-12). The theme for the 56th annual meeting is "Building Just, Diverse and Democratic Communities." Please renew your SSSP membership now and encourage your colleagues and students to do the same. You can renew via the secure website, <http://www.sssp1.org>. Remember that the benefits of membership include a subscription to *Social Problems*, the SSSP newsletter, division newsletters, and information about the annual meeting. Please renew your membership in SSSP and the Family Division, and join us for next year's annual meeting in Montreal.