



# Family Division Newsletter

*Society for the Study of Social Problems*  
*Editor: Ebonie L. Cunningham-Stringer, PhD, Wilkes University*

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FROM THE DESK OF OUR DIVISION CHAIR

Dear Family Division Members,

I hope you are having a peaceful, fruitful, and enjoyable summer. As the annual meetings are fast approaching, this newsletter brings to your attention opportunities for involvement with the Family Division, our members’ successes, and the Division’s exciting sessions for you to attend while in New York City. Just a reminder, the meetings are at the Roosevelt Hotel (Madison Avenue at 45<sup>th</sup>) from August 10-12. Please make sure you are registered for the meetings and have made hotel reservations at the conference hotel.

In addition to the sessions sponsored by the Family Division (see below), I would like to encourage you to attend three other events:

- **The Family Division gathering on Friday, August 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 AM in the Sutton Suite.** This is a great opportunity to share your ideas about possible sessions for the 2008 meetings, to become more involved in the division, or just to meet other division members. New members, graduate students, and non-members are all welcome and encouraged to attend. The gathering is informal, inclusive, informative, and always fun.

- **Division-Sponsored Reception on Friday, August 10 from 6:30pm - 7:30pm in the Vanderbilt Suite.** Enjoy good company, along with free food and drinks, with members of 19 of the special problems divisions (including Family) at the annual reception.
- **The 7th Annual AIDS Fundraiser Auction and Karaoke on Friday, August 10 from 9:00pm-11:00pm in the Vanderbilt Suite.** You'll be able to place bids on many wonderful items. Proceeds from the AIDS Fundraiser will go to After Hours, an advocacy organization based in NY. Their fundamental objectives are to contribute to HIV/AIDS prevention and to assist people living with HIV/AIDS.

As my two years of serving as the Family Division Chair are coming to an end, I would like to congratulate Dr. Cheryl Boudreaux on being the incoming division chair. Dr. Boudreaux is an active and enthusiastic member of SSSP and the Family Division. She teaches "Families in Society" at Grand Valley State University and enjoys the network with experts in the field that the division provides. Although I have enjoyed my time as chair, I know I am leaving the division in very capable hands. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Boudreaux.

I would also like to thank Dr. Ebonie Cunningham Stringer for editing this newsletter for the past two years. Her work has made my job much easier and I truly appreciate the help.

Please enjoy reading the rest of this newsletter. And don't forget to attend the Family Divisions' sessions, gathering, and reception. I look forward to seeing you in August!

Respectfully,

Nancy Mezey  
Division Chair

<i>CALL FOR RESOLUTIONS</i>
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Every year the Special Divisions write resolutions that SSSP then sends to certain sectors of society. Resolutions are SSSP's way of making political and social statements to the wider public. Resolution topics can cover any topic relating to the division. So, if you want SSSP to make a statement regarding an area in which you have expertise (e.g., legalizing same-sex marriage, child welfare laws, family friendly policies, etc.), please write up the resolution that includes a statement of the problem, a suggested solution, and who should receive the resolution (e.g., members of congress; specific corporations, etc.), and email them directly to me ([nmezey@monmouth.edu](mailto:nmezey@monmouth.edu)).

<i>CALL FOR SUGGESTED 2008 PAPER SESSIONS</i>
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At our division gathering, we will be proposing paper sessions for 2008. If you are unable to make the gathering, please forward your ideas to me ([nmezey@monmouth.edu](mailto:nmezey@monmouth.edu)) so that I can propose them on your behalf (although we would rather you attend the gathering). Be sure to include a suggested organizer (yourself, for example?) for each session you propose.

## SHARING OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Many of our division members are making important contributions to their fields. Please take the time to review a few of our members' recent accomplishments. Consider making the included publications a part of your library and/or incorporating them into course syllabi or your applied work. If you would like to share information about your recent publications or other accomplishments with other division members, please contact Ebonie Cunningham-Stringer ([ebonie.cunningham@wilkes.edu](mailto:ebonie.cunningham@wilkes.edu)).

**Congratulations to Karen L. Bune !!!** **Karen L. Bune** recently received the 2007 NOTABLE ALUMNI AWARD from the School of Public Affairs, American University, Washington, D. C. Ms. Bune was recognized for her contributions to public service--specifically her work in the field of criminal justice and victimology, her national public speaking, and her writing. Ms. Bune is a writer for officer.com and is a subject matter expert on victim issues. Her article, "Multi-Jurisdictional Approaches to Domestic Violence" appears in the July edition of officer.com. She is also a writer for NYCOP online magazine ([www.nycop.com](http://www.nycop.com)). Ms. Bune is employed as a Victim Specialist in the domestic violence unit of the State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County, MD. She is an Adjunct Professor at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia and Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia where she teaches victimology. She is a Lecturer at American University, Washington, D. C. where she teaches criminology. Ms. Bune also serves as a consultant for the Office for Victims of Crime, Training and Technical Assistance, U.S. Dept. of Justice. Ms. Bune is a nationally recognized speaker and trainer. She can be reached at [kbune@gmu.edu](mailto:kbune@gmu.edu)

**Congratulations to Dr. Michelle Janning!!!** Dr. Janning, an Associate Professor of Sociology at Whitman College, is a recent recipient of The Paul Garrett Fellowship for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching at Whitman. **We are proud of your accomplishment!**

**Congratulations to Angela Hattery!!!** Angela Hattery and co-author Earl Smith recently published a book entitled, *African American Families*. Sage 2007. **Well done, Angela!**

**Congratulations to Amy Hequembourg, Ph.D.!!!** Dr. Hequembourg recently published her book, *Lesbian Motherhood: Stories of Becoming*. Published by Harrington Park Press, the book combines qualitative research with post-structural theory to explain the process of how lesbians become mothers, addressing issues of changing identities within current social and political contexts.

## GRADUATE STUDENT PAPER COMPETITION

**This year's winner of our annual Family Division Graduate Student Paper Award is Alex Bierman of the University of Maryland!** Alex will present his paper "Marriage as a Buffer for the Effects of Perceptions of Neighborhood Disorder on Mental Health in Old Age: The Role of the Self," during the summer meetings in New York. We hope that you will plan to attend this session and offer Alex your support and best wishes. Direct any correspondence to: Alex Bierman, [abierman@socy.umd.edu](mailto:abierman@socy.umd.edu). Please find the abstract for the winning paper printed below.

## **Marriage as a Buffer for the Effects of Perceptions of Neighborhood Disorder on Mental Health in Old Age: The Role of the Self**

### **ABSTRACT**

This research examines whether marriage protects older adults from the mental health effects of perceptions of neighborhood disorder. It is suggested that marriage will protect elders' mental health by preventing a decrease in their senses of mattering and mastery. While research has examined whether other types of social connections buffer the effects of neighborhood disorder, for older adults the buffering effects of marriage may be especially important because aging is often accompanied by a weakening of social networks, so that marriage may be one of the few remaining sources of social support. Analyses of a longitudinal study of older adults shows that perceived neighborhood disorder is related to decreases in mastery and mattering, but only for the non-married. Marriage buffers the effects of neighborhood disorder on depression, and these buffering effects are explained entirely by differences in changes in mastery. This research shows that neighborhood conditions continue to affect mental health well into old age by shaping elders' sense of mastery, but a social connection to a significant other helps mitigate these effects.

### **SUMMER BOOK REVIEW**

**By Cheryl Boudreaux**

#### **SUPPLEMENTAL READING: A NOVEL**

I just finished reading *My Sister's Keeper*, a novel by Jodi Picoult. It is an excellent supplemental reading for family dynamics and family systems. I'm thinking about using it as a supplemental reading in my class "Families in Societies." Featured is a couple with three children one of which has a kind of Leukemia that is fatal. However, she is able to prolong her life through adulthood via her sister's "donations" from her own body.

The book raises a number of current and vital sociological issues. Some Sociology of the Family issues include: love and marriage choices, the conjugal relationship, choosing to parent, designer babies and fertility treatment, neglect, abuse, sibling love, loyalty, rivalry, and death and dying within the context of the family.

Because the American family has undergone so many changes in the last 30 years many people believe that we are seeing a decline in family as a social institution to be replaced by something else or a series of other social institutions that perform the same functions. In this climate the issue of sacrifice comes up as one of the reasons for the decline in the family. Personal sacrifice is often touted as one of the characteristics that make the family stronger. That is "what are we willing to sacrifice for the family?" This text raises this issue very well by questioning the wisdom in eclipsing the relevance of all other lives in a family with the needs of the one in crisis. It reminds us that none of us know how long we have to live. It shows us what neglect can do to children and it hints at resilience if we are given enough time. Jessie can be redeemed and there is hope for Anna if she had lived. Sibling placement, middle child neglect and acting out are exacerbated by the fact that the middle child in this case not only feels both helpless and invisible but also feels guilty for not being able to help out. Another issue is the one of death with dignity (knowing the facts and being given the power to make decision about your life and death until the last moment. This is something Anna in the story did not have until her last moments.) and when do we give up on prolonging life at all cost. We are faced with helplessness in the face of death and we grab at anything to keep our loved ones with us a little longer.

This novel explores this and other issues in the context of the family. Other issues explored include: Treatment options that involve extreme experimental methods, stem cell research, designer babies, organ donations from living relatives, the right of children to say no to their parent's decisions, the view of children as present oriented, parental rights over their children, and finally, the family as a whole. What affects one affects everyone. Overall a good issue-raising book and a good summer read.

Enjoy!

Cheryl Boudreaux

CONFERENCE INFORMATION
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Below is a list of all of the Family Division sponsored, special, and co-sponsored sessions. Please support your fellow division members and attend as many Family Division sessions as possible. Be sure to check the final program for any room or time changes. The Family Division hopes to see you in New York City!!!

*The Society for the Study of Social Problems  
57<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting  
August 10-12, 2007  
Theme: Research Matter: Creating Knowledge, Policy and Justice  
The Roosevelt Hotel  
Madison Avenue at 45<sup>th</sup>  
New York, NY*

#### **FAMILY DIVISION SPONSORED SESSIONS**

**Session 38: In Vitro To Video Games: Families, Children, and Technology**

Friday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2:30-4:10 PM

Room: Park Suite

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Michelle Janning, Whitman College

**Session 57: Religion and Families**

Saturday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 8:00-9:40 AM

Room: York Suite

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Melanie Heath, Rice University

**Session 117: Criminal Justice and the Family**

Sunday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, 10:30 AM – 12:10 PM

Room: Promenade Suite

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Ebonie L. Cunningham Stringer, Wilkes University

## **SPECIAL SESSION**

### **Session 96: Student Award Winning Papers II**

Sunday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, Sunday, 8:30am - 10:10am

Room: Lexington Suite

Winner of the 2007 Family Division's Graduate Student Paper Competition: Alex Bierman, University of Maryland, presenting "Marriage as a Buffer for the Effects of Perceptions of Neighborhood Disorder on Mental Health in Old Age: The Role of the Self."

## **FAMILY DIVISION CO-SPONSORED SESSIONS**

### **Session 71: Families across the Lifespan: Research on Motherhood**

**Saturday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 12:30-2:10 PM**

Room: Beekman Suite

Co-Sponsored with Youth, Aging, and the Life Course Division

Organizers & Presiders: Heather Dillaway, Wayne State University and Nancy Mezey, Monmouth University

### **Session 90: Coordinating the Family/Household**

Saturday, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 4:30-6:10 PM

Room: Broadway Suite

Co-Sponsored with Institutional Ethnography Division

Organizer, Presider & Discussant: Alison I. Griffith, York University

### **Session 104: Making Privilege Visible: Employment, Families and Poverty**

Sunday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, 8:30-10:10 AM

Room: Promenade Suite

Co-Sponsored with Poverty, Class, and Inequality Division

Organizer & Presider: Orly Benjamin, Bar-Ilan University

Discussant: Michal Kromer-Nevo, Ben-Gurion University