



Family Division Newsletter

Society for the Study of Social Problems

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ATTEND THE FAMILY DIVISION BUSINESS MEETING

The Family Division Business Meeting will be held Friday, August 13th, in Cathedral Hill B at the conference hotel, from 10:15-11:45 a.m. It is at this meeting where members (that's you!) can propose sessions for the 2005 meeting, get involved as session chairs and organizers, talk about family division business, learn about leadership opportunities in SSSP, and find out more about the graduate student paper competition. Please come – we're a fun bunch and we love involvement from the division membership!

2004 CONFERENCE INFORMATION
THE CULTURE OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS: POWER, PEOPLE, AND HISTORY
 August 13-15, San Francisco, California



The 2004 SSSP Conference is almost here! The PDF version of the program can be found at http://www.sssp1.org/extras/PRELIMINARY_PROGRAM.pdf. Here are the sessions sponsored or co-sponsored by the Family Division – we'd love to see you there:

Date & Time	Session Number and Title	Room
Fri., Aug. 13, 12-1:30	Session 21: Families and Body Management	Marina
Fri., Aug. 13, 3:30-5	Session 35: Community Responses to Domestic Violence	Presidio
Sat., Aug. 14, 11:30-1	Session 45: Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality and Care Work	Pacific Heights
Sat., Aug. 14, 11:30-1	Session 48: Families and the Use of Reproductive Technologies	Marina
Sat., Aug. 14, 4:45-6:15	Session 77: Parenting and Family Diversity	Marina
Sun., Aug. 15, 10:15-11:45	Session 91: Culture, Identity, and Families I (thematic)	California
Sun., Aug. 15, 12-1:30	Session 101: Culture, Identity, and Families II (thematic)	California

Other cool events that may interest you:

- Film Exhibit – throughout the conference in Room 375
- AIDS Fundraiser and Graduate Student and New Member Reception – Friday, Aug. 13th 10-11:30 p.m. Check the final program for location.
- Presidential Address – Kathleen Ferraro – Saturday, Aug. 14th 10-11:15 a.m.
- Reception and Awards Banquet – Saturday, Aug. 14th starting at 7 p.m. by the pool.

See you in San Francisco!

BOOK REVIEW

Vander Ven, Thomas. 2003. *Working Mothers and Juvenile Delinquency*. New York, NY: LFB Scholarly Publishing LLC.

Vander Ven (2003) analyzes data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth using regression to investigate the direct effect of maternal employment on delinquency and the indirect effects through family-oriented delinquency pathways. This research monograph presents an analysis that is relevant not only to criminologists but also to those sociologists of the family who are interested in the relationship between parental work, family processes, and the behaviour of children. What is immediately apparent in this scholarly work is the degree of theoretical sophistication that is coupled with an extremely thorough review of the literature that accounts for research on the effect of parenting styles on delinquency but also “the antecedent structural factors that shape family life” (5) such as the conceptual difference between unemployed mothers who are welfare-reliant and those who rely on other family members’ earnings.

The results suggest that, in general, the children of working mothers are no more likely to be delinquent than other children. Specifically, maternal employment should not be considered as a criminogenic risk factor. However, in some cases “coercive work, welfare reliance, and lower family income are associated with lower quality parenting and negative child behaviour” (132-133). I feel one of the most significant findings is that an increase “in current family income results in a decrease in delinquency, even when controlling for the delinquent pathway variables” (125). I found this important since criminologists have been debating the effect of socio-economic status (i.e., social class) on the prevalence of youth crime and reached no general consensus on this issue. Consequently, Vander Ven’s findings have policy relevance in that an increase in the wages and employment opportunities for women will have the effect of reducing the prevalence of delinquency for their children.

This work also challenges and supports social control, social support, differential association, and class-based theoretical assumptions. For example, consistent with much past research, an association was found between delinquent peers and delinquency. However, maternal employment was not found to be a contributing factor to these associations. Rather, the data suggested that living in a socially disorganized neighbourhood appeared to increase the likelihood of delinquent peer associations. Similarly, maternal employment was not found to be significantly associated with a youth’s attachment to school or to have the effect of decreasing the level of supervision which has been linked to an increase in the prevalence of delinquent behaviour. Also of interest to those investigating the effect of family structure on child outcomes were the findings that found no significant difference between married and single mothers. In fact, maternal employment of single mothers was found to have no direct or even indirect effect on delinquency.

The use of secondary data at times placed constraints on the operationalization of theoretical constructs; however, the author employed composite measures which generally had adequate reliability to counter this limitation. Yet, there are some methodological concerns that should be considered when interpreting the results. As the author notes, although longitudinal data are appropriate for this research problem, the NLSY sample is not representative of U.S. mothers since it was predominantly composed of women who gave birth to their children at a young age. This resulted in the exclusion of women who postpone childbearing in order to pursue advanced education and their careers (e.g., the average level of education was less than high school). Additionally, the composite measure of delinquency is somewhat problematic in that it should not be confused with a measure of youth crime as it incorporates variables concerning truancy, dishonesty, and parental curfew violations. Having said that, the author correctly informs readers that delinquency was measured for youth between the ages of 12 and 14 which is an age group that has a generally low level of delinquency when compared to, for example, youths between the ages of 15 and 17. Finally, the author, presumably due to limitations in the data, does not distinguish between reconstituted and first marriage couples within the family structure variable. However, he does test the hypothesis from developmental criminology that marital discord is a significant predictor of delinquency, and finds that marital conflict is neither influenced by maternal employment nor a predictor of delinquency in this study.

The connection between maternal employment and delinquency is a “socially constructed problem” (118). Despite the negative association in the media and popular culture, Vander Ven has made an extremely important contribution by showing that the characteristics of maternal work have relatively little or no effect on delinquency and whether a mother works or the conditions of her employment are not, in and of themselves, a criminogenic risk factor for future child behavioural outcomes. This scholarly monograph would be an excellent choice as a supplemental reading for an advanced undergraduate course in the sociology of the family or juvenile delinquency as well as serving as an important required reading in related graduate courses.

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Do you have a book you’ve written that you’d like reviewed in this newsletter? Do you have a book in mind that you’d like to review? E-mail Michelle Janning at janninmy@whitman.edu for further information.