

# Family Forum

FALL 2008 ~ ASA SECTION ON SOCIOLOGY OF THE FAMILY

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## Message from the Chair

Dear Family Section Members:

It is an exciting time to be a member of the ASA family section. Our numbers have swelled to over 800, which reflects the great diversity and intellectual vitality of the section and the substantive and policy significance of the topics we study. This number also is important because it means that we can field 5 sessions for the upcoming ASA meetings in San Francisco (August 8-11, 2009). Plus, this year, we received an additional session for having our section sessions scheduled on the final day of the ASA program.

We have a great slate of topics for the 2009 annual meetings. Thanks to so many of you who submitted proposals or ideas for open sessions. In the end, the final set of sessions reflects your interests. The topics are intended to be broad in order to increase the number of submissions and the diversity of potential papers (theory, quantitative, qualitative, policy, demographic, etc.). The sessions and organizers include: Work-Family Balance (**Liana Sayer**), Dating and Intimate Relationships (**Susan Sprecher**), Immigrant and Transnational Families (**Lindy Williams**), New Family Forms (**Michael Rosenfeld**), Families in Poverty (**Joanna Badagliacco**), and Religion and Family Life (**Nick Wolfinger**). The round table papers will be organized this year by **Michelle Budig**.

The family section also is jointly sponsoring an invited session with the Population Section on "Marriage in the Millennium: Papers Honoring Steve Nock's Scholarship" (**Paul Amato**). As many of you know, Steve Nock, University of Virginia, passed away unexpectedly in January 2008. This joint session is a tribute to his lifetime of scholarly contributions to the family social sciences and demography.

It is not too early to be thinking about submitting papers. Submissions via the Online Submission System on the ASA website will be available beginning December 1, 2008. The submission deadline is January 14, 2009.

As the new section chair, I also want to thank immediate past chair, **Paula England**, for ably leading the section



through the past year of section activities, and **Laura Sanchez**, who continues serving the section in her role as Secretary-Treasurer. **Mary Noonan** has graciously agreed to continue to serve the section as the Newsletter Editor. **Sanjiv Gupta** will also remain in his role as webmaster for the section (see <http://www2.asanet.org/sectionfamily/> for up-to-date information about section activities). I speak for all section members in thanking each of them for their hard work and dedicated service to the section.

Congratulations also goes to **Judith Seltzer**, who is the chair-elect of the family section. Her term as chair begins after the 2009 ASA meetings. I am also pleased to report that **Michelle Budig** and **Becky Pettit** were elected to the Council, and that **Jennifer Holland** (University of Wisconsin-Madison) was elected as Student Representative to the Council. Congratulations all!

Elsewhere in the Newsletter is the call for nominations for section awards. I encourage section members to think seriously about submitting nominations for our three Section awards (p. 5): the Distinguished Scholarship or Service Award, the William Goode Book Award, and the Outstanding Graduate Student Paper Award. Please watch for the submission deadlines!

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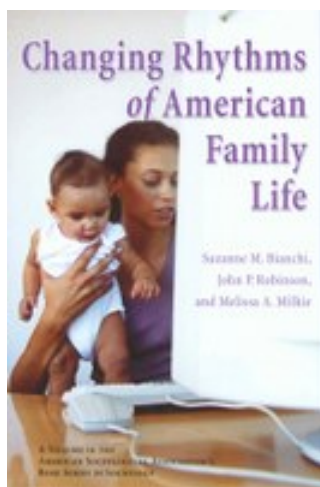
## Congratulations 2008 Family Section Award Winners

### 2008 William S. Goode Book Award Winners:

**Suzanne M. Bianchi, John P. Robinson, and  
Melissa A. Milkie**

**Book: *Changing Rhythms of American Family Life***

Award Committee: Pam Smock (Chair), Mary Blair-Loy, Kathryn Edin, Glenna Spitze, Susan Stewart, and Megan Sweeny.



*Changing Rhythms of American Family Life* focuses on how mothers, fathers, and children spend their time, using detailed time-diary data spanning the past four decades. The authors uncover surprising new findings about how Americans are balancing the demands of work and family. For instance, one of the most valuable findings reported in the book is that mothers' time

at work has not resulted in an overall decline in sleep or leisure time. Rather, mothers have made time for both work and family by sacrificing time spent doing housework and by increased "multitasking."

*Changing Rhythms of American Family Life* rose to the top of the 2008 Goode Award Committee's list of books because of its extraordinarily strong and rigorous methodology and substantive depth. Committee members remarked that the book is a thoughtful and balanced look at the changing cultural constructions of motherhood, fatherhood, and childhood. The book directly grapples with major debates about how women's employment may, or may not, impact child well-being, gender equality, and the routines and context of family life. In sum, it convincingly overturns some conventional wisdoms, finding that families have adapted to changing circumstances in ways that preserve time with children. As the authors state, "Families can undergo great change and still....protect that which seems most dear....we are most impressed with family life's amazing resilience in the face of unprecedented social change."

### 2008 Best Graduate Student Paper Award

**Winners: Sarah Halpern-Meekin and Laura Tach  
Paper: "Heterogeneity in Two-Parent Families and  
Adolescent Well-Being."**

Award Committee: Paula England.

Imagine two children in two different families, each of whom is in a two-parent family headed by their own biological mom and dad. They differ only in that one has a step-sibling (because one parent had a previous marriage), where the other does not. The 2008 Best Graduate Student Paper by Sarah Halpern-Meekin and Laura Tach shows that the child with the step-sibling often does less well on a wide array of indicators, suggesting that something about the dynamics between step-siblings or some other step-family dynamic may have effects on even someone in a two-parent family.

The award committee received numerous excellent papers this year, but the paper by Halpern-Meekin and Tach stood out for its impressive methodological rigor and clarity. Using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, the authors find that shared biological children in blended families have worse outcomes than children in simple two-parent families, even though they reside with both of their biological parents. These differences occur for academic performance, delinquency, school detachment, and depression. Current explanations in the family literature do not account for the poorer outcomes of shared children in blended families. The authors suggest that the presence of half-siblings creates a unique family situation that is not accurately represented in the current family literature.



Laura Tach (left) and Sarah Halpern-Meekin are currently doctoral candidates in sociology and social policy at Harvard University

## Congratulations 2008 Family Section Award Winners

### 2008 Distinguished Career Award Winner: Steve Nock

Award Committee: Sanjiv Gupta (Chair), Philip Cohen, Fran Goldscheider, Maria Kefalas, and Maureen Waller

A Tribute to Steve Nock—Written by *Brad Wilcox, University of Virginia*

Steve Nock believed strongly that sociology was largely about the study of institutions—including marriage and the family. He is probably best known for his award-winning book, *Marriage in Men's Lives*, which sought both to understand the contemporary functions of the institution of marriage and the ways in which marriage changes men, mainly for the better. Steve took a Durkheimian view of marriage, arguing that the norms, laws, and resources associated with marriage provide an essential modicum of order to the relationships of couples; in this same Durkheimian spirit, he also argued that marriage serves other important social functions: for instance, marriage promotes the welfare of children by increasing the odds that children enjoy the ongoing love and support of both their parents, and a stable home. Steve argued that alternatives to marriage, such as cohabitation, were less likely to serve the long-term welfare of adults and children. In his words, "Nothing binds cohabiting couples together except love and affection. As desirable as these emotions are, they are a flimsy basis for an enduring relationship."



All this is not to say that Steve pined after the halcyon days of Ozzie and Harriet. Steve believed that institutions needed constant reform and renewal. He wrote, for instance, that our contemporary "challenge is to reinvent marriage as an institution based on dependency that is not automatically related to gender." Indeed, before he died, Steve was planning on launching a study of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts.

But Steve was concerned that contemporary family scholars—not to mention many of his fellow citizens—were insufficiently attentive to the average social consequences of trying to live our lives outside of the institutional framework of marriage. So, if he were here tonight, I think he would encourage all of you to think about how the continuing deinstitutionalization of marriage—that is, the increasingly normless character of relationships and childbearing in our society—affects the quality and stability of intimate unions, and the welfare of children. For instance, is the spread of cohabitation associated *on average* with higher or lower quality relationships in our society? Or, is it associated *on average* with more or less stability in the lives of children? You get the idea.

Finally, let me say a personal word about Steve. Steve was an exemplary teacher, mentor, friend, and—appropriately enough—husband. No one in our department spent more time with students and colleagues. His door and his heart were always open to colleagues and students looking for guidance, wisdom, and a hearty laugh. In fact, after his death, a friend wrote me to testify to Steve's legendary humor. She had been at a conference where people were asked to mention any special talents they had. Steve claimed he was a champion hog caller - and he proceeded to demonstrate. The conference collapsed in laughter.

Now I can't begin to do justice to Steve's marriage to Daphne, but let me just say he was a devoted husband to Daphne Spain, whom he met in the sociology department at UMass Amherst way back in 1972. In memory of Steven Nock, a true gentleman, scholar, and husband. May he rest in peace.

## Family Sessions at the 2009 ASA Meeting in San Francisco

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<b>SESSION TITLE</b>	<b>ORGANIZER</b>
WORK-FAMILY BALANCE.....	Liana Sayer, Ohio State University
DATING AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS.....	Susan Sprecher, Illinois State University
IMMIGRANT AND TRANSNATIONAL FAMILIES.....	Lindy Williams, Cornell University
NEW FAMILY FORMS.....	Michael Rosenfeld, Stanford University
FAMILIES IN POVERTY.....	Joanna Badagliacco, University of Kentucky
RELIGION AND FAMILY LIFE.....	Nick Wolfinger, University of Utah
ROUNDTABLES.....	Michelle Budig, University of Massachusetts
MARRIAGE IN THE MILLENNIUM: PAPERS HONORING STEVE NOCK'S SCHOLARSHIP.....	Paul Amato, Pennsylvania State University



## Call for Nominations for 2009 Section Awards

**Attention all Section Members! Please consider submitting nominations for our three annual section awards. Award winners will be honored at the 2009 ASA meeting in San Francisco.**

**Distinguished Career Award.** This award is designed to recognize the collective career or major service contribution of a sociologist's work in the field of sociology of the family. The award recognizes the entire body of the person's work, not just one publication. Major service to the field is defined as those developments that have made a substantial impact on research on the family. The deadline is **March 1, 2009**, and requires only that you send a paragraph description justifying the nomination. (The person's vita is helpful but not necessary.) Please send nominations to Philip Cohen (email: pnc@unc.edu).

**William S. Goode Book Award.** This award is for a book published on the family in 2007 or 2008. To nominate a book, write a letter briefly stating why the book should be considered. Self nominations are appropriate. Textbooks and edited volumes are not eligible. The deadline is **January 15, 2009**. Please send nominations to Paula England (email: pengland@stanford.edu).

**Best Graduate Student Paper Award.** Graduate students are invited to submit a paper to be considered for the best graduate student paper on the family. The paper may be completed work or work-in-progress, but should not be a proposal for future work. The paper should be article length, and can be based on a Master's or Doctoral thesis, course paper, or a paper submitted to a journal or conference. Co-authored papers are acceptable if all authors are students, but the prize must be shared. Send the paper by **April 1, 2009** via email to Dan Lichter (email: dtl28@cornell.edu.)

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Renewing or joining the Family Section is easy! Just complete the ASA membership form online at <http://www.asanet.org> or return the form via regular mail. Check the box next to the "Family Section" on the form. Section Dues are just \$12 per year (\$5.00 for student members).

## Miscellaneous News

**Job Opportunities.** (Note: Members are also advised to look for job opportunities in the ASA Job Bank: <http://jobbank.asanet.org/jobbank/index.cfm>).

**University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.** The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater invites applications for an anticipated tenure-track Assistant Professor position. The teaching of Sociological Theory and Principles of Sociology are the Department's primary areas of need. Other Department needs include family, health and illness, demography, and gender. Candidates will be expected to teach, contribute to department and university service, publish scholarly works, and seek grants as appropriate. Ability to work effectively with students, faculty, and staff with diverse backgrounds is expected. Interested persons should apply in writing to: Leda Nath, Search Committee Chair, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice, 428 White Hall, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Whitewater, WI 53190. A complete application packet consists of letter of application, curriculum vitae, three current letters of recommendation, teaching evaluations, transcripts, and samples of publications or presented papers.

**Conferences.** February 12-14, 2009. International Conference on Parent Education and Parenting, University of North Texas, Denton, TX. This is a three-day interdisciplinary conference that will bring together regional, national, and international scholars, policymakers, parent/family educators, early childhood interventionists, family support professionals, school/parent liaisons, students, and child and family advocates. For more information, visit [parentconf2009.unt.edu](http://parentconf2009.unt.edu).

**New ASA Section-in-Formation: Disability in Society.** Many of the topics which are being explored in the sociology of the family are being examined – sometimes in quite innovative ways – in this new section. For instance, the study of disability engages with issues of gender equality, care and caring, abuse and violence, runaway children, adoption, substance abuse, the use of genetic screening techniques – and many more issues which impact on the daily lives of families. The Disability section is pleased to be offering FREE membership to 40 graduate students who are current members of ASA who would like to join the section. We encourage potential members to contact the chairs of the membership committee, Liat Ben Moshe (email: [lbenmosh@maxwell.syr.edu](mailto:lbenmosh@maxwell.syr.edu)) or Mark Sherry (email: [markdsherry@yahoo.com](mailto:markdsherry@yahoo.com)).

