

Family Section Newsletter

Spring 2026

www.asafamilysection.com



Introduction

Welcome to the Spring 2026 issue of the ASA Family Section Newsletter! We're excited to feature our "Ask the Expert" column this issue, pairing graduate student questions with responses from established family scholars in our network. You'll also find member announcements and new scholarship highlights inside. Enjoy the read, and we hope to see you in person at ASA this summer!

Olivia Hu and Virginia Leiter, Newsletter Editors, ASA Family Section



Letter from the Chair

Kara Joyner
Distinguished Research Professor of Sociology and
Demography
University of Texas, San Antonio



Dear Family Section members,
I am grateful to Olivia Hu and Virginia Leiter for serving as Editors for this 2026 Spring Newsletter and to the Mentoring and Inclusion Committee (Hope Harvey, Olivia Hu, Haylie June, and Haoming Song) for their production of the “Ask the Expert” column. Thanks as well to the scholars who answered these important questions. I am indebted to Liana Sayer (our previous section chair) and Sojung Lim (our treasurer) for all their helpful answers to my questions this past year.

I am super excited about this year’s meeting in New York City! I appreciate the time and energy that members have devoted to making this year’s meeting a major success. In the next newsletter, we will share information on sessions, roundtables, and other events. Below we provide information on ways you can support graduate students and postdocs. As you may know, the deadline for conference registration is approaching (June 1st).

Announcements

MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIOR SCHOLARS

The 2025-2026 ASA Family Section Mentoring and Inclusion committee (chaired by Hope Harvey) invites senior scholars to participate in our annual mentoring program as a mentor. This program aims to establish connections between senior and junior scholars, as well as among peer groups of scholars with shared interests. We'll match you to mentees in pairs or mentorship pods based on your responses. Please, fill out this survey at [this link](#) by June 1st.

from the Chair

GUIDELINES FOR APPLICATIONS FOR THE LINDA BURTON AWARDS

The Family section's Linda Burton awards offer 3 travel grants of \$500 each to any section member who will be attending the 2026 ASA annual meeting in New York for family section related activities. Only current section members are eligible to apply. Members who self-identify as Black/Indigenous/People of Color (BIPOC) are especially encouraged to apply. The applicant does not need to be on the 2026 meeting schedule.

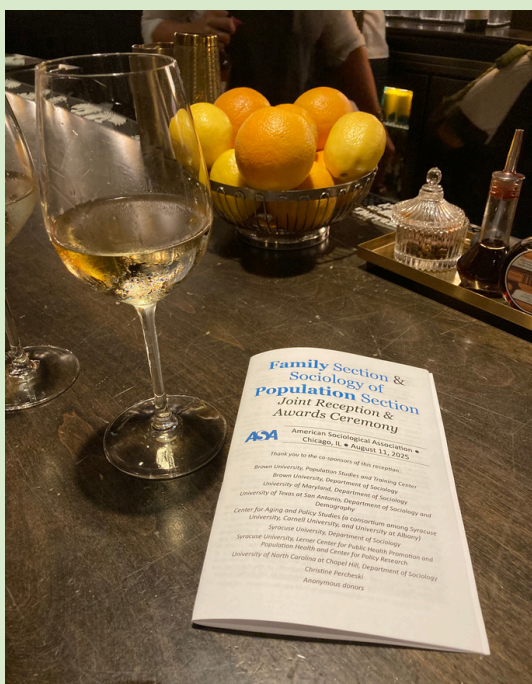
Please send a letter of interest and CV to the section chair (Kara Joyner) at kara.joyner@utsa.edu. The letter of interest should explain the applicant's past and current engagement in the section. Such engagement includes but is not limited to committee membership, other volunteer work, and presenting at annual meetings as well as any planned engagement for 2026.

Applications are due before Friday, June 12, 2026.

Contact Kara Joyner, kara.joyner@utsa.edu, if you have any questions.

FUNDRAISING FOR THE RECEPTION

We will be holding our joint reception (with the Population Section) at the conference hotel (Hilton) on Monday, Aug 10th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm. Each year, our reception is made possible by the generosity of our donors. We depend on member contributions to help cover the costs of our annual reception, and we begin reaching out this time of year for donations.



Please consider making a personal donation or asking your department, center, institute, or any other group you're affiliated with to make a donation to support the ASA Family/Population Reception. Any amount is greatly appreciated.

Donations are accepted online [here](#) (preferred) or by check. When you click the link, the donation name is "Section Donation - Family - Annual Meeting Reception".

If your department or center needs an invoice for a donation or co-sponsorship, please let me know (kara.joyner@utsa.edu).

from the Chair

FUNDRAISING FOR THE RECEPTION continued...

Donations via check are not encouraged, however, will be accepted. Please see Fundraising/Sponsorship guidelines for instructions for submitting checks. Please also remember to include required language in solicitations. Fundraising/Sponsorship approvals are good for the stated fiscal year. Approval must be obtained each year.

Additional information you may need: The donations will be used to pay Hilton for food and beverages. If, through some unlikely combination of events, all funds are not exhausted for the reception, we will request approval from donors to hold funds for the 2027 reception. The ASA is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization recognized by the IRS. Your gift is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please consult your tax preparer for details.

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS – Purchase by July 31

ASA members can gift a Section membership to existing student members or an ASA membership for students.

Section Gift Memberships

ASA members can gift a Section membership to an existing student member. Members may join Sections throughout the year but please note that if a member's expiration date is less than 12 months away, newly added Sections will have the same expiration date as one's ASA membership. So the earlier you give a gift membership, the longer the member has to enjoy the benefits of membership and opportunity to learn more about the Section.



Sections may not use their operating budgets to fund gift memberships. However, if a Section receives an unrestricted gift from a member or another source, those funds may be used in support of gift memberships.

Section gift memberships are not available for purchase from August 1 to August 31 each year. Please note that gift memberships are nonrefundable, and the discount code expires 30 days after purchase.

from the Chair

GIFT MEMBERSHIPS continued...

How to Purchase Section Gift Memberships

- Login to the member portal at <https://my.asanet.org>.
- On the left-hand menu of the dashboard, select Gift Memberships and then click Purchase a Gift Section Membership.
- Select the Section and the number of gifts for that Section you would like and then check out.
- Complete the checkout process and purchase the gifts.
- You will receive an email with redemption codes and instructions you will need to provide the gift recipient(s).

Gift ASA Memberships for Students

ASA members can gift an ASA membership to students. Sections may not use their operating budgets to fund gift memberships. However, if a Section receives an unrestricted gift from a member or another source, those funds may be used to support of gift memberships.

Please note that gift memberships are nonrefundable, and the discount code expires 30 days after purchase.

How to Gift ASA Memberships for Students

- Login to the member portal at <https://my.asanet.org>.
- On the lefthand menu of the dashboard, select “Gift Memberships” and then click “Purchase a Gift Membership for a Student.”
- Select how many gifts you would like and then check out.
- Complete the checkout process and purchase the gifts.
- You will receive an email with redemption codes and instructions you will need to provide the gift recipient(s).

Special Feature

Ask the Expert

Question 1: I find that studying non-US contexts as a family sociologist comes with both rewards and challenges. Can you talk about your experience and how you navigate these?

Hayley Pierce
Associate Professor of Sociology
Brigham Young University

Studying non-U.S. contexts has been both rewarding and challenging in meaningful ways. One of the biggest rewards is that it helps me question assumptions that are often built into U.S.-based theories of family life. Looking at families in different cultural and policy settings pushes me to think more carefully about what we assume is “normal” or universal. It often sharpens my theoretical thinking and leads me to ask better, more precise questions.

I have also found international work to be deeply collaborative. Working with scholars and partners who know the local context well strengthens the research and helps me avoid oversimplifying or misinterpreting what I’m studying.

At the same time, there are challenges. One is providing enough context when presenting or publishing in U.S.-focused spaces. I’ve learned that I can’t assume familiarity with the institutional or cultural setting. Instead, I try to clearly explain why the context matters and how the case speaks to broader conversations in family sociology.

Another challenge is measurement and data. Concepts and survey measures do not always translate neatly across countries. Rather than seeing this as a setback, I try to treat it as an opportunity to think carefully about what our measures are really capturing and whether our concepts travel well across settings.

Overall, I’ve found that studying non-U.S. contexts requires extra attention to context, collaboration, and clarity. But it also strengthens our field by broadening the questions we ask and the perspectives we include.



Ask the Expert

Yang Hu

Associate Professor of Sociology

Social Research Institute

University College London

Let me start by situating myself as a family sociologist: I was born and grew up in China, I now work and live in the UK, and most of my research focuses on families in Asia, Europe, and North Africa, as well as transnational family life – with only a couple of collaborative projects touching upon the US context. So, in a sense, I come to this question as an “outsider,” and I have come to think of that position as a particularly intellectually generative place to work from.

In my experience, studying families outside where I live is infinitely exciting and eye-opening. It gives me a valuable opportunity to make the familiar unfamiliar – to notice and question the assumptions about family life that we might otherwise take for granted. For example, when Yue Qian and I examined intergenerational educational mobility across 106 societies worldwide in our *Nature Human Behaviour* [paper](#), what struck us most was how much the role of mothers – often “invisible” in social mobility – varied across and mattered in contexts far beyond the usual Euro-American “center.” Bringing a global scope to our question did not just add cases; it changed what we thought we already knew.

My own journey into researching families beyond a Western context began with my [PhD](#), which examined how couples negotiate work and family arrangements in Chinese-British transnational, inter-ethnic families. I had originally planned to analyze large-scale secondary data, but such data on Chinese-British families simply did not exist at scale. So I pivoted to first-hand ethnographic and interview work: what felt like a major setback turned out to be profoundly enriching. In my fieldwork, I was welcomed into many families and homes, and I came away with an understanding that perhaps no mainstream survey dataset in the UK could have provided.

More recently, in collaborative [work](#) with Kausiki Sarma on women’s experiences of housework and marital violence in India (*Gender & Society*), listening closely to the women we interviewed opened up a whole new way of thinking about housework for us. This work led us toward understanding how the mundane (housework) and the extreme (violence) are entangled in many women’s everyday lived experiences of housework, moving beyond familiar frameworks of labor division and gender performance.



Ask the Expert

Working on families outside the US (or UK) context also enabled me to collaborate with and learn from a diverse range of scholars. For example, in a co-edited [special issue](#) on how young adults navigate their family-work life courses in the Global South (with Anette Fasang, Ignacio Cabib, Adam Cooper, and Rob Gruijters), we brought together authors working across a wide range of countries outside the Euro-American contexts. The intellectual stimulation was incredible: it constantly pushed us to interrogate what we assumed to be universal about family and work transitions, and to sit with the discomfort of realizing how much of our theoretical toolkit was built on a narrow slice of human experience. What particularly strikes me is the myriad ways in which family lives are constantly negotiated, constructed, and contested under diverse social, economic, cultural, historical, and political conditions. Studying families in diverse global contexts does not just add cases to our comparative data; rather, it fundamentally challenges and enriches our sociological imagination.

That said, some challenges are real, too, such as the “burden of contextualization.” When publishing research on non-Western families in many US (or Western) journals, for example, there is an expectation that one needs to do more explanatory work: translating sociocultural, historical, and political context for readers who may be less familiar with it, often within already tight word limits. It requires a kind of dual fluency in the focal context and in the (US/Western) audience, which adds an additional shift of intellectual labor that is often not expected of those studying (the “default”) US or Western families.

The question of audience also extends beyond academic publication. In translating my research for a public audience, I often work with media, write op-eds for outlets like The Conversation, and think about how sociological insights travel across contexts. One moment has stayed with me: a couple of years ago, Rory Coulter and I published a [paper](#) on living-apart-together relationships and older adults’ mental health in the UK; following our media outreach for this piece, we received a handwritten letter from an 86-year-old reader from Pittsburgh. They shared with us in detail their experiences of living apart from their late partner and how they felt “heard” through our research. The letter, now pinned right at the center of my clipboard, has been a powerful reminder that researching families beyond the US (or where we live) is not just an endeavor to unveil comparative differences; it also helps us realize how the very human experiences of family life – the warm, the heartening, and the challenging – often resonate across very different contexts.

Ask the Expert

Question 2: I'm a scholar in family sociology trying to make strategic decisions about where to submit my articles. What factors should I consider when selecting a journal? Beyond Journal of Marriage and Family and Demography, what journals should I consider?

Barbara J. Risman

College of Liberal Arts & Sciences Distinguished Professor
University of Illinois Chicago

There are both intellectual and practical strategic decisions to make when deciding where to submit an article. Let's start with the intellectual. What conversation are you hoping to enter? Whose work are you in conversation with? The journals that have published those articles are likely to be the most useful for your career. This used to be vitally important in pre-internet days, but now, of course, people searching on your topic will find your article whether or not it is in the journal of record in the area. Still, the first place to think about when choosing articles is where those you are in conversation with are published.



But there are all sorts of pragmatic factors that go into a decision as well. Perhaps the most important has to do with the ranking and citation rates of the journal, and this is not always a straightforward case of the higher the better. In fact, often at the start of a career, less selective journals are often a better choice. If you are going to be seriously evaluated (for a new job, or for promotion of rank), you need to build a vita quickly, and going to the top-ranked journal in the discipline, or your sub-field, could waste valuable time. If it is a long shot, do you really want to tie the manuscript up for at least several months, at most a year or more, under review when chances of success are low? If you have a timeline by which publication is essential, go to journals with higher acceptance rates. If you can find a special issue, go for it, as the percentage of manuscripts published from those submitted for special issues is often dramatically higher. Of course, if time is no problem, for example, you are three years from going on the job market, shoot for the top. You will often get great reviews even if rejected.

Ask the Expert

Another pragmatic decision is whether the current Editor of the journal in question has been publishing articles even vaguely on your topic. Go take a look at what has been published under the current editorial team. Just because they have never published a paper on underwater basketweaving and that's your topic doesn't mean they never will. But if they've published several, you can be assured they think the topic is worth their journals' pages.

A key decision as well is whether to send your paper to a substantive specialty journal or a generic journal that publishes on all topics. Once upon a time, in a pre-Internet era, it was really important to place papers in substantively focused journals because then everyone in the subfield would see it. But hardly anyone gets hard copy journals to leaf through anymore, so keywords are what matter now. Still, if you are entering a conversation that has been held mostly in a few journals, such as *Demography*, *Journal of Marriage & the Family*, *Family Issues*, *Journal of Family Theory*, then those should be at the top of your list. But don't dismiss the generalist journals as possibilities. There are, of course, the most highly ranked generalist journals, *ASR* and *AJS*. To send to one of these, you need to be sure your paper will be of interest to a generalist audience, that is, more than just the colleagues in your research area. But there are many regional journals; every regional sociological association has one, and they are often great places to place a paper.

Finally, a bit of advice beyond where to place it. Presume that rejections come before acceptance. Once your paper is complete, make a list of five journals where you might publish it. Rank those journals. Choose the one you will start with and read its mission statement. Be sure you fit in its mission, or you'll get a desk reject. If the journal rejects you, go to the second on your list. Develop a thick skin because rejection is part of the publishing game. If you want to see more publishing advice, follow my blog on www.thewritingguides.org. Good luck!

Ask the Expert

Sarah Hayford
Professor of Sociology &
Director of the Institute for Population Research
Ohio State University



There are lots of things to take into account as you are thinking about where to submit your work.

Of course, you want to think about the scientific and intellectual dimensions of publishing. The point of publishing your work is to contribute to building scientific knowledge, and that can only happen if other people read and respond to your work. So, you want to publish someplace where your work will be read by people who are likely to find it useful. A journal's impact factor is one measure of how frequently the work published in the journal is cited, but impact factor is also influenced by things like citation practices in the field, so it shouldn't be the only consideration. You might also look at the journals you read, or the journals where scholars whose work you are influenced by are publishing their work. A shortcut here is to look at the reference list of your article and see what journals appear in that list.

You also need to consider the logistics of publishing. How quickly will your submission be reviewed? What are the requirements for page counts/word counts? Are there submission fees or publication fees? Do you want your article to be open access, and are there additional fees for open access publication? (Sometimes publication charges can be waived for early career scholars, or your library might have programs that pay for open access for certain journals.) Most of this information should be on the journal's website, but not all journals provide average review times. You can ask other scholars about their experience with different journals, although of course review times will vary even within the same journal.

And, you may want to think about how other people will assess the journals you are publishing in when it comes time to apply for jobs or go up for promotion. The Journal of Marriage and Family is generally considered the best journal for family scholarship, both among family scholars and outside of the subfield. Strategically, you may want to consider submitting some work to generalist sociology journals instead of/in addition to journals that focus on family research. As a rule of thumb, the best subfield journals are seen as "better" than mid-range generalist journals, but perceptions vary and it may depend on the specific department or the specific journals.

Thinking about specific journals for family scholars, Family Relations, the Journal of Family Issues, the Journal of Comparative Family Studies, the Journal of Family Studies, and the Journal of Family Theory and Review could all be good options.

Ask the Expert

Question 3: The sociology job market seems particularly challenging this year! What advice do you have for early-career scholars trying to realistically navigate this landscape?

Sigrid Willa Luhr
Assistant Professor of Sociology
University of Illinois Chicago

It is an extraordinarily difficult time to be a graduate student or early-career scholar looking for an academic job, and much of what happens on the job market is, frustratingly, out of your hands. However, there are aspects of the process that are within your control. One suggestion, which ideally starts before you go on the job market, is to build networks beyond your own university. You can start small by simply introducing yourself to other grad students at regional conferences or ASA. Most sections, including the Family Section, host mentoring events for grad students that offer great opportunities to meet new people, including more senior scholars in your field. The benefit of these is that they connect you with scholars who have already opted in to the program – and don't require you to cold-email someone!

Once you decide to go on the job market, it is crucial to start working on drafts of your job market materials – including cover letters, research statements, and teaching statements – well before they are due. These documents are short but take a great deal of time to craft. Ideally, you want to have decent drafts of these to share with your recommenders with ample time before letters of recommendation are due. It is also easy for these statements to start to sound generic. I always remind my grad students to show and not tell by thinking of concrete examples and evocative details to back up their claims. Rather than saying that you teach in a student-centered way, for instance, offer examples of how you do this in practice. I suspect that this sort of specificity will be all the more important with the rise of generative AI, which tends to homogenize writing and may produce statements that sound similar.



Ask the Expert

You should also seek advice from a variety of people! Your committee members are a great resource and likely have a wealth of institutional knowledge, but it can be especially helpful in this moment to talk to scholars who started new jobs in the past few years. Think of people you know who graduated from your program recently, and reach out to them directly. In the spirit of this, I asked Dr. Isaiah Jeong, one of our newest PhD graduates at UIC, to share his advice about what helped him land a tenure-track job this year. Here's what he had to say:

"Along with people who are experts in your field, do practice job talks with those outside of the field. Communicating your research in ways that relate to a general audience is important. I did my practice job talk/teaching demo with my sister-in-law, who is college-educated but knows nothing about sociology. This helped me to set the barometer for the audience that often consists of undergrads and professors."

Job talks can be mystifying if you have never prepared one before (and especially if the longest talk you've ever given is a 12-minute ASA presentation). To get a sense of what a job talk should look like, it's good practice to see a wide range of talks, even if they aren't in your immediate area. Colloquium talks can give you a practical feel of what to do (or sometimes what not to do) in a longer talk, including how to present findings, how much time to spend on each section of the talk, and how to field questions. And remember, these talks are ultimately about presenting your research. I've seen many practice job talks that spend the majority of the time reviewing prior research, leaving little time to showcase the researcher's own contribution.

Finally, it's important to remember that no matter who you are, you will likely deal with some rejection on the job market. Sometimes this comes in the form of never hearing back from many of the jobs you applied to. In other instances, rejection comes after you had a flyout that you thought went pretty well. This can all be incredibly demoralizing. But perhaps it is also a comfort to know that it happens to just about everyone and that it is not something to take personally. In all likelihood, it wasn't that the committee took issue with you or your research, but that there were simply an overwhelming number of very qualified candidates. You also never know what the department really needs - perhaps they are looking for someone who can teach a specific class or fill another gap in the department. These aims are not always communicated to candidates but often shape decisions.

And so as you navigate the academic job market, be sure to make time for the other things that are important in your life. Spend time with your friends. Go for a long walk or hike or anything else that makes you feel good and grounded. And remember that at the end of the day, this is all just a job!

Good luck!

Ask the Expert

Haoming Song

Assistant Professor of Sociology

Case Western Reserve University

Thank you for inviting me to share my two cents on navigating the academic job market. I am a tenure-track Assistant Professor at Case Western Reserve and received my PhD in Sociology from Brown in 2023. I was on the market during the 2022-23 cycle (roughly August to February), submitted multiple applications, and completed 4 flyouts. What I share below reflects my most honest advice, including some potentially unpopular opinions, especially for research-intensive universities (e.g., RIs).

First, as the question itself suggests, there is a real need to acknowledge that this has been a difficult year (and in fact several difficult years) for the sociology job market. As sociologists, we are trained to analyze structural constraints, but we may not always apply the same lens to academia itself. The scarcity of (good) jobs, federal funding cuts, and broader uncertainty have led to cautious hiring decisions, often beyond the control of departments. Facing these constraints, it is natural to feel overwhelming or even hopeless. Yet, as my career/writing coach and yoga instructor both told me: feeling is real and valid, but thinking is controllable. Reframing these challenges and situating them in contexts can bring some relief, and sometimes, can reveal areas where opportunities still exist and where you will find some fit with.

Second, I encourage early-career scholars to treat the job search itself as a job and to actively seek out professionalization resources. It never hurts to start early once deciding to go on the market. The process is exhausting, labor-intensive, and often emotionally cold. What we can control is how we pace and prepare ourselves for that environment. In my case, perhaps because it was my first time, I approached it very seriously. By July 2022, I had prepared all my materials and shared them with my dissertation committees. Four members returned detailed feedback within weeks, and I am not shy at all about making big structural changes to my materials. Meanwhile, I read widely on professional advice and found several particularly helpful: including a general guidebook, slides on timing and negotiation, and sample portfolios.



Ask the Expert

Third, once starting the process, find the support group, both within and outside academia. Sociologists, especially those in our Family section, understand that people face very different situations that are gendered, classed, racialized, etc. For example, some may have an “unrelocatable” partner, some have very young children, and others even need to care for aging parents abroad. Do not hesitate to reach out to “your people” when things are difficult and when you found yourself not in your best version. There is also a natural pause during the winter break, which I personally found essential for my physical and mental health. Instead of refreshing the email inbox constantly, take some time off and spend time with loved ones or with yourself. During my own job market year, we went onto a trip to Las Vegas for two concerts without an offer in hand, and I still had a blast.

I also want to address a potentially sensitive issue: how to relate to peers on the market especially those in the same areas. Searches are often field-specific (and family-search positions are relatively rare), so it is easy to see others only as competitors, at least on paper. Having been trained in the highly competitive Chinese gaokao system, I am very aware of how quickly feelings of comparison or jealousy can arise. However, my advice is astoundingly opposite: befriend and support each other. I personally found genuine joy in seeing my peers secure positions – even ones that I had applied for– because it is rewarding to see hard work paid off. Moreover, we never know where the wheels of career will bring us. With some time lags, these same peers may become our future reviewers, collaborators, letter writers, or conference organizers in the longer run. Instead of viewing it as a zero-sum game, it is both wise and humane to approach each other with respect and kindness.

Finally, I offer one piece of advice directly related to research. When I think about future colleagues, I am more excited about candidates who demonstrate, at least a potential of, an independent line of work that is distinguishable enough from that of their advisors. From my experience on search committees at both Brown and Case Western– both attracted an ocean of qualified candidates each cycle –this independency is often what stands out. This can be intentionally signaled from solo-authored work or first-authored publications, with or without advisors. To be clear, mentorship is valuable and our community is built on the voluntary and often unpaid labor on research, teaching, and grants-writing. But eventually we are writers for ourselves, and we need to develop own voice. This voice may appear naïve to us (though often we are biased against ourselves at this early stage), yet I believe it is an important thing to work on throughout our career. I note that this might be harder for postdocs working within larger, project-based teams where senior authors appear on every paper. Even in those cases, maintaining first-authored work and ensuring that both your own materials and letter writers clearly articulate independent contributions can make a difference.

Ask the Expert

Melissa Alcaraz

Assistant Professor of Sociology
Brigham Young University

Navigating the job market is always tricky but especially in the current moment. Here is what I would recommend for candidates now: 1) Prioritize your mental health by setting clear boundaries and routines before entering the job market. And 2) concretely define what “success” means for you. To help you stay grounded, set clear boundaries around work (and rest) hours, determine your non-negotiable for jobs, and maintain daily habits like exercise or time away from screens. These structures can act as a lifeline during an intense and uncertain period, helping you recharge and ultimately be more productive. While the job market is undeniably difficult and outcomes are influenced by factors beyond your control, having consistent routines can keep you focused and prevent burnout.



At the same time, define multiple versions of success by developing backup plans and realistic expectations about different career paths (within or outside of academia). Recognize that luck and structural constraints play a role, so focus on what you can control: your preparation and mindset. Building and maintaining a strong support network is also essential: connect regularly with peers, share experiences, and celebrate successes and mourn setbacks together. Finally, remember that this period is just one step in a longer career journey. Even if things don't go as hoped this year, there will be future opportunities, and you can try again.

Ask the Expert

Question 4: Public sociology and community engagement feel more important than ever, but I'm unsure how to move from intention to action. How do scholars identify or create meaningful opportunities for public engagement? If I feel ready to write for a broader audience, what concrete steps can I take to actually reach the public?

Joan Maya Mazelis

Associate Professor of Sociology & Director of Gender Studies
Rutgers University-Camden

What a great question, and how encouraging it is to me as a public sociologist that you're asking this! A clue to an important part of the answer from my perspective is in your question—"community engagement." Engaging communities as we do our work and to disseminate our work is vital, but engaging in community is part of how we do it well.

Working with others—in a community of like-minded scholars—can be key to effective public engagement. There's no need to try to go it alone. A generation ago, it was more difficult to figure out how to find opportunities for public engagement, but in 2026, there are some wonderful organizations devoted to connecting scholars to each other and their work to broader audiences.

The first concrete step I recommend is to join these organizations! I am a member of and former chapter co-leader for the Scholars Strategy Network (SSN), and a senior fellow and member of the Board of Directors of the Council on Contemporary Families (CCF). ASA's own Sociology Action Network (SAN) is also a great resource.

SSN and CCF have different but overlapping missions. SSN is larger and has chapters all over the country. SSN is great at connecting members to legislators, media outlets, and civic organizations. They can help you craft and pitch an op-ed, and they alert members to opportunities to weigh in on policy issues by giving public testimony. CCF is a smaller organization that hosts workshops and conferences, helps connect scholars with members of the media, and offers an Early Career



Ask the Expert

Scholars program to aid selected applicants to write brief reports based on their research. For members of the Family section, CCF is a great fit with its focus on families. Anyone doing research that's policy-relevant should join SSN! Learn more about joining CCF [here](#) and about joining SSN [here](#).

But joining these groups is just your first step. As a second step, you have to put yourself and your ideas out there, beyond the scholarly journals members of the public don't read. It can be a little scary, in part because we may be trained to write for other academics, but we aren't usually trained to write for the public. But you are the expert in your subject matter, and you can do it! Both CCF and SSN strive to help members learn to write for broad audiences by avoiding jargon (SSN even has a podcast called [No Jargon](#)). Both organizations even provide editing assistance!

A third step is getting your friends at other institutions and colleagues at your own to join too. It's fun and fulfilling to do this sort of work with people you value. As we broaden the community of people doing public sociology, it strengthens the impact we have. And bringing in your colleagues has an added benefit—it spreads the acceptance and even the celebration of public scholarship within our institutions.

Doing this public work while maintaining an academic role and working toward tenure and beyond can feel risky—because at some institutions, public sociology still isn't sufficiently valued, though it's slowly changing. Many public scholars sadly feel they must wait until tenure to engage as much as they'd like, or they feel they have to see their public sociology as “extra” work they do, outside of academia, because it isn't valued by their departments or institutions. They even sometimes feel they have to hide that they do or want to do public work from those who think doing it detracts from our roles as scholars.

That's why a fourth step is, if you are in a position of power (say, with tenure, or as a department chair or a dean), to normalize public engagement. Counter naysayers at reappointment or tenure or promotion meetings and speak up on behalf of those doing this important work. Help to change the metrics that discount public engagement.

So many of us do work that matters to people outside of academia, and we should make our work accessible to them. When our work is relevant to policy, we want policymakers to know what we've learned. Sociology has the capacity to make a real difference, and public engagement is part of how we do that. But we don't have to figure out how to do it on our own—we can work with others in organizations like SSN and CCF to broaden the reach of our scholarship.

Ask the Expert

Allison Pugh
Professor of Sociology
Johns Hopkins University



First of all, I want to commend you for recognizing the need. There are a lot of good reasons why sociologists should try and reach a broader audience – our work decodes some of the central challenges of our day; universities in general (and sociology in particular) are under attack, and explaining what we do and why it is relevant for everyday folk is one way to demonstrate importance; and people need sociology to find their way to positive social change.

Sometimes, the public finds you – a local school or civic group will ask you to speak; a journalist will call you up and use your conversation for background, or even quote you as you weigh in on their topic. This is most likely when you are a senior scholar or you have recently published a book on an issue. But more often, scholars need to take a more proactive approach.

That means first figuring out what you have the bandwidth and skillset for. Are you willing to write an op-ed or letter to the editor? Serve as a guest on a podcast? Give talks to local nonprofits? Public appearances tend to come to those who have done some public-facing writing, so that's often a first step. Brainstorm a list of possible short essays that you might write for particular outlets. If your research is related to an issue that is starting to draw attention, for example, you might see if you can draft an op-ed with the major points you want to make; you can leave the first paragraph unwritten to await the timely hook you'll use when something newsworthy happens to make your piece a must-read for the editors.

Second, there are organizations that can help you make connections with journalists: most universities have a communications office with media contacts; some non-profits are dedicated to forging these links, such as the Council on Contemporary Families; even ASA employs communication staff that can help make those connections (they ask members to identify if they want to be a "media resource," and [this webpage](#) has links to guides about how to write an op-ed or to do a media interview). If you have published a book, the press will have a publicity staff that can be responsive if you make a specific ask (e.g., to forward an essay you have written to a contact at a particular outlet).

Ask the Expert

Finally, you do not have to wait for existing outlets to get around to deciding that you are attention-worthy. Some people begin with an active social media presence on a particular platform that they find compatible. Others start writing a substack or occasional newsletter, or create a podcast to showcase their unique take on the issues. If that sounds daunting, you can pair up with other scholars to do it together. One academic I know does a podcast periodically interviewing interesting scholars she knows, a great way to start developing a public-facing platform. These kinds of home-grown efforts often start out with quite modest returns, but consistent appearances can build a regular audience, with news events periodically sending even more people your way.

The space between academia and the public can sometimes seem cavernous. Yet we are all better served when more regular folk know what we do and why, and furthermore when they can apply a sociological vision to understanding the world around them. Doing what we can to break out of the academic silo is an important contribution we all can make.



Recent Publications

Books

- Abril, Julie C. 2026. **A Theory of the Culture of Crime: A Case Study of One Native American Indian Family.** (link to purchase [here](#))
- Fee, Molly. 2026. **Believing in Light After Darkness: Displacement and Refugee Resettlement.** University of California Press.
- Valdivia, Carolina. 2026. **Sanctuary Making: Immigrant Families Reshaping Geographies of Deportability.** University of California Press.

Articles

- Berger, Lawrence M., Tia M. Dickerson, Andrew Gelman, Hye-Min Jung, Seonghun Lee, Margaret Thomas, and Jane Waldfogel. 2026. **"Adjusting for Underreporting of Child Protective Services Involvement in the Future of Families and Child Wellbeing Study and Assessing Its Empirical Implications Through Illustrative Analyses of Young Adult Disconnection."** Social Service Review.
- Dickerson, Tia M. 2026. **"Do We Not Matter?!: A Qualitative Exploration of Vicarious Racism Stress in Married Black Americans."** Family Relations.
- Fee, Molly. 2025. **"Displacing Refugees: Resettlement and the Reconstitution of Families."** Social Problems.
- Hu, Olivia Y. 2026. **"Racialized Romance: An Intersectional Analysis of East Asian Women's Masculinities Construction Processes."** Sociology of Race and Ethnicity 12(1):101-16.
- Joshua, Kaitlin H. 2026. **"I Thought I Could Postpartum-Proof My Experience': Embodying, Resisting, and Negotiating Medicalization Online."** Social Science & Medicine 398:119157.
- Martínez Echagüe, Inés. 2026. **"Equality Takes Work: A Process to Understand Why Women Still Do Most of the Household Labor."** Social Forces, 104(3): 898-916.
- O'Brien, Shay. 2026. **"Kinship Interlocks: How the Intimate Exchange of Wealth, Status, and Power Generates Upper-Class Persistence."** American Sociological Review.
- Siegel, Derek P. 2025. **"Trans Women, Uterine Transplants, and 'Biological Difference' In the USA: Notes from the Field."** Medical Anthropology.
- Stacey, Lawrence, and Kristi Williams. **"The Intergenerational Reach of Maternal Adverse Childhood Experiences: Associations with Children's Emotional Support and Cognitive Stimulation."** Sociological Science 12.30 (2025): 743-768.

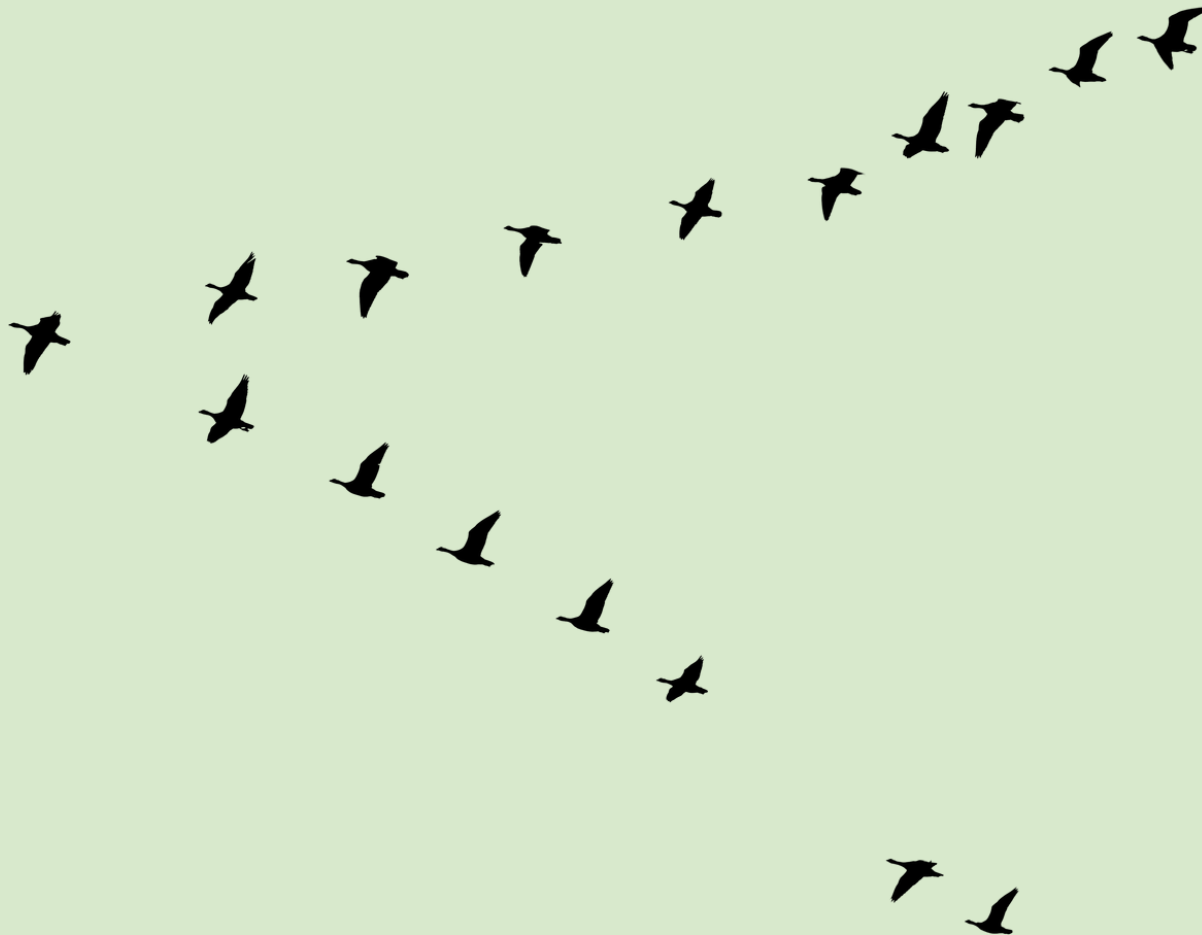
Recent Publications

Articles

Tenorio, Luis Edward. 2026. "**How Public Benefits Make Citizens in Latino Mixed-Status Families: Self-Efficacy, Institutional Engagement, and Concerted Citizenship Cultivation.**" Social Forces 104(3):874-97.

Valdivia, Carolina. 2025. "**Hyper-Illegality, Reentry, and Everyday Life in the United States Post-Deportation.**" RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences 11 (4): 217-237.

Yang, Yining Milly. 2026. "**Overeducated and Underpaid: Characteristics of H-1B Visa Holders from New Administrative Records, 2014-2024.**" International Migration Review.



Newsletter

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