

CHILDNEWS

*The Official Newsletter of the Sociology of Children Section
The American Sociological Association*

Volume 1, Number 1

Winter 1992

Acting Chair

Gertrud Lenzer

Secretary and Treasurer

William J. (Beau) Weston

Nominating Committee

Sandra L. Hofferth, Chair

Peter Adler

Harriette Pipes McAdoo

Elizabeth G. Menaghan

By-Laws Committee

Angela Aidala

Donna Lee King

Gertrud Lenzer

**Organizers of Sessions and
Roundtables for 1993 Meeting**

Judith D. Auerbach

Julie Gricar Beshers

Glen H. Elder, Jr.

Doris R. Entwisle

Debra Friedman

Donna King

Gertrud Lenzer

Karen Mundy

Research Committee Organizer

Richard K. Scotch

Membership Committee

Angela Aidala, Chair

Donald J. Hernandez

Richard Scotch

Teaching and Syllabi Committee

Maureen Kelleher

Sue Wright

Editor

Donald J. Hernandez

**THE SOCIOLOGY OF CHILDREN:
PAST AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

Gertrud Lenzer

Department of Sociology

Brooklyn College and Graduate Center, CUNY

It gives me much pleasure to inform you that the Sociology of Children was formally established as the 31st Section of the American Sociological Association at its first Business Meeting at the Annual Meetings in Pittsburg on August 21, 1992. It was a historic and exciting moment; and more than 70 colleagues from across the country with different theoretical perspective and research interests were present. Well before the December 1992 deadline and less than a year since our first initiative, the Section membership is more than 300. We are also happy to have colleagues from other social sciences and from abroad among us, and we offer them warm welcome.

(continued on page 2)

**For section inquiries or
suggestions please contact:**

Gertrud Lenzer

The Graduate School and University Center

The City University of New York

New York, New York 10036-8095

tel.: (212) 865-6853

fax: (212) 316-1627

**Submit news and
announcements to:**

Donald J. Hernandez

Chief, Marriage and Family Statistics Branch

Population Division

U.S. Bureau of the Census

Washington, DC 20233-001

tel.: (301) 763-7987

fax: (301) 763-4133

(continued from page 1)

In the course of the two-hour meeting in Pittsburgh, we chose the officers of our new section, decided upon the topics for the two sessions available to us in Miami next year, and agreed upon the creation of Research Groups in the Section and of a Sociology of Children Network Directory in order to facilitate collaboration among our members. We all believe that the new Section should be as broadly based and ecumenical as possible as far as different theoretical orientations and research perspectives are concerned. This general conception will also be reflected in the Section Bylaws which have been drafted and submitted to the ASA Council by the Bylaws Committee. In addition, we felt it desirable to recruit more widely members from other social sciences and from abroad.

In addition to the two sessions in Miami next year, which are available to a Section with over 200 members, Seymour Martin Lipset, President of ASA during 1992-93, has agreed to do a Special Session on "Social Reconstruction and the Rights of the Child: An Examination of the Social Implications of the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child." Carla B. Howery, Deputy Executive Officer of ASA, has proposed "Teaching the Sociology of Children" as an additional Teaching Workshop to the 1993 annual meeting program. At the Business Meeting in Pittsburgh, it was also decided to make one hour of the two hours of the Section Business meeting in Miami available to organize Refereed Roundtables (20 in all) for the purpose of convening Sociology of Children Research Groups which are in the process of formation. In other words, I have tried to create as many opportunities to present papers as possible and to allow for maximum participation of our members in the activities of this new Section.

The overall response to the creation of the Sociology of Children as a new field and Section has been most encouraging, and there will be plenty of opportunities for us to explore collaborative research possibilities with colleagues here and abroad. For example, the Sociology of Children has received a warm welcome from and invitations to collaborate with the Society for Research in Child Development and the Society for Adolescent Development. Other organizations, such as the National Council of Jewish Women have invited

members of the Section to submit papers for the 2nd National Head Start Research Conference, "Translating Research into Practice: Implications for Serving Families with Young Children." In addition, we have established close relations with European sociologists who are in the process of founding a Thematic Group on the Sociology of Childhood in the International Sociological Association. Moreover, the Norwegian Centre for Child Research together with the Norwegian Government have founded CHILDWATCH INTERNATIONAL in order to create a Global Network of Child Researchers. We may wish to explore opportunities for future cooperation. We have also brought the sociology of children to the attention of funding agencies, such as NICHD, who have expressed an interest in receiving proposals from Section members. In addition, members of the press have indicated an interest in our research and will be delighted to call on us for information. Last but not least, there are also a number of journals which welcome contributions from child sociologists. This is just a brief summary of recent developments. In the following pages of *CHILDNEWS*, we will try to bring you up-to-date in greater detail about some of them. Please, do not hesitate to get in touch with me in case you have any questions.

In order for the Sociology of Children Section to remain viable and flourishing, much will depend on members actively recruiting among their colleagues. Angela Aidala was kind enough to design the enclosed brochure for that purpose.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have helped to get the Section off to such a propitious start. In particular, I would like to thank on behalf of the entire Section Don Hernandez for his willingness to become the first Editor of *CHILDNEWS*.

Purpose of Sociology of Children Section

As far as the general purpose of the Sociology of Children Section is concerned, colleagues at the 1992 Business Meeting suggested the following wording which has been incorporated into the Bylaws:

"The purpose of the Section is to foster the development and dissemination of sociological perspectives on children in the areas of research, theory, policy, practice, and teaching. By children we mean every human being from infancy to the age of legal majority."

The definition of "children," in particular, is important, in a number of ways. For one, "childhood," "adolescence" and "youth" are in themselves social and cultural constructs. The meaning of such categories and membership in them often vary considerably when viewed in historical, cross-cultural, cross-national and class perspectives. Rather than being taken as points of departure for defining our subject matter, "infancy," "childhood," "adolescence" and "youth" should themselves be the very topics of our investigations and analyses. As a rule, however, the social category of "children" is characterized by the circumstance that those who are included in it do not enjoy in full measure the constitutional and legal rights of adults who also legally represent them and upon whom they are dependent. This conception of the Sociology of Children in the wider sense has the added advantage of offering a fuller and less fragmented view of a major social group in any society. It will also bring together sociologists who are working on different stages in the life course of young people. At this point, we also know very little about how children and young people view their own membership in these categories. Last but not least, the definition of the Sociology of Children Section also coincides with the one employed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989, which at this moment has 124 state members. It is to be expected that it will be a matter of only a very short time indeed before the United States, as one of the outstanding countries, will become a signatory of the Convention. According to recent information, the American Psychological Association has endorsed the Convention. GL

SOCIOLOGY OF CHILDREN RESEARCH COMMITTEES

One of the exciting features of the new Section will be the organization of Research Groups around specific research interests. This will allow Section Members to be as active as possible and to benefit from these different sub-networks in the Section. One hour of the Business Meeting in Miami will be made available for Roundtables which will allow Research Groups to meet, organize and present their ideas. (Please see details under "Roundtables in Miami.")

Here are the names and addresses of colleagues who have agreed to organize Research Committees:

Research Committee Organizer:

Richard K. Scotch, School of Social Sciences, The University of Texas at Dallas, P.O. Box 830688, Richardson, TX 75083-0688, Tel.: (214) 690-2920

Applied Child Sociology Research Committee

Organizers:

Douglas Oxenford, Ohio State Department of Human Services, 34 Cherry Hill Court, Howard, OH 43028, Tel.: (614) 752-6200

and

Brian F. Pendleton, Department of Sociology, Buchtel College of Arts and Sciences, Akron, OH 44325-1905, Tel.: (216) 972-7481

Child Policy Research Committee:

Organizer:

Richard K. Scotch
(at address given above)

Religion and Morality Research Committee:

Organizer:

William J. (Beau) Weston, Department of Anthropology and Sociology, Centre College, 600 W. Walnut Street, Danville, KY 40422, Tel.: (606) 238-5256