



**ASA NEWS:** Aug. 8, 2009

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**On-site Press Room** (Aug. 8-11): Hilton San Francisco, Union Square Rooms 1 & 2, (415) 923-7558 or (415) 923-7561

**EMBARGOED until Saturday, August 8, 8:30 a.m. PDT**

### **Marriage, Family on the Decline for Highly Educated Black Women**

SAN FRANCISCO — Fewer black women with postgraduate degrees are getting married and having children, according to research to be presented at the 104<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the American Sociological Association.

“In the past nearly four decades, black women have made great gains in higher education rates, yet these gains appear to have come increasingly at the cost of marriage and family,” said Hannah Brueckner, professor of sociology at Yale University; co-director of Yale’s Center for Research on Inequalities and the Life Course; and the study’s co-author. “Both white and black highly educated women have increasingly delayed childbirth and remained childless, but the increase is stronger for black women.”

The study, which is the first to review longitudinal trends in marriage and family formation among highly educated black women, found that black women born after 1950 were twice as likely as white women to never have married by age 45 and twice as likely to be divorced, widowed or separated.

The gap in the proportion of black and white highly educated women living with a spouse has grown over the decades, increasing from 9 percent in the 1970s to 21 percent in 2000-2007.

“Highly educated black women have increasingly fewer options when it comes to potential mates,” Brueckner said. “They are less likely than black men to marry outside their race, and, compared to whites and black men, they are least likely to marry a college-educated spouse.”

Although black women were more likely than white women to have children early in their academic careers, 45 percent of those born between 1955 and 1960 were childless at age 45 compared to 35 percent of white women born in the same time period.

Brueckner and the study’s lead author Natalie Nitsche, a graduate student in sociology at Yale University, analyzed data from the U.S. Census Bureau’s Current Population Survey to uncover marriage and family trends among black women with postgraduate degrees. The Current Population Survey has surveyed approximately 50,000 households monthly for more than 50 years to collect data on the American labor force.

The paper, “Opting Out of the Family? Racial Inequality in Family Formation Patterns Among Highly Educated Women,” will be presented on Saturday, Aug. 8, at 8:30 a.m. PDT in the Hilton San Francisco at the American Sociological Association’s 104<sup>th</sup> annual meeting.

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To obtain a copy of Nitsche's and Brueckner's paper; for more information on other ASA presentations; or for assistance reaching the study authors, contact Jackie Cooper at [pubinfo@asanet.org](mailto:pubinfo@asanet.org) or (202) 247-9871. During the annual meeting (Aug. 8-11), ASA's Public Information Office staff can be reached in the press room, located in the Hilton San Francisco's Union Square 1 & 2 room, at (415) 923-7558, (415) 923-7561 or (301) 509-0906 (cell).

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### **About the American Sociological Association**

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