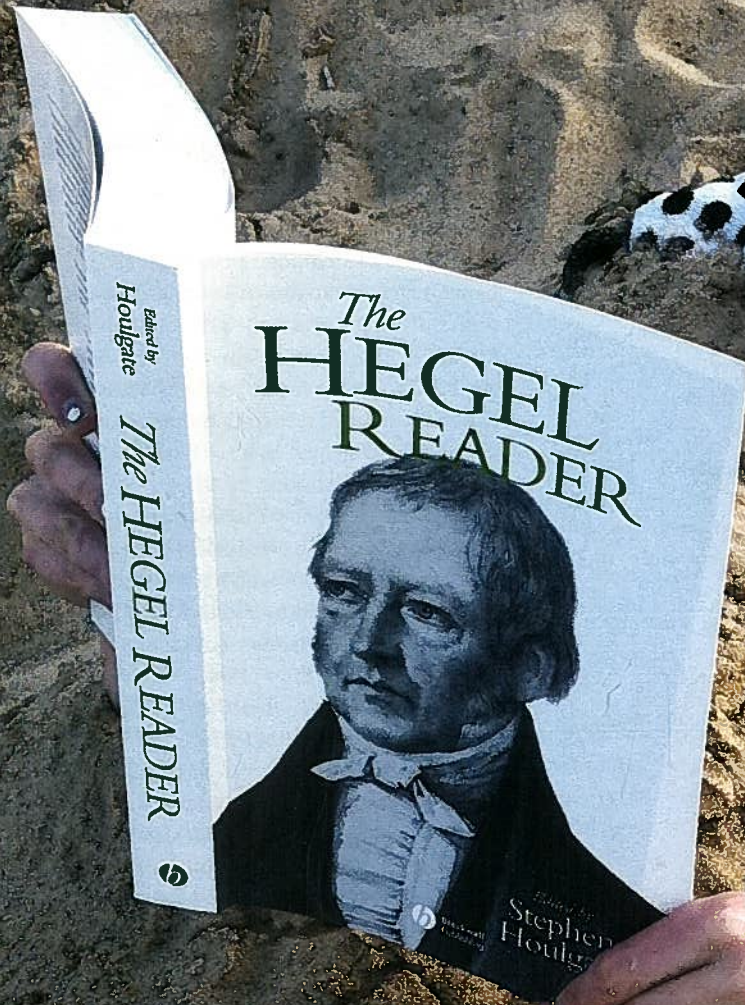


SYMPOSIUM



A Publication of Shimer College

Summer 2012



**DOING SCIENCE:
“OH, LOOK,
SHINY THINGS”**

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**A LITTLE CORNER
OF SHIMER**

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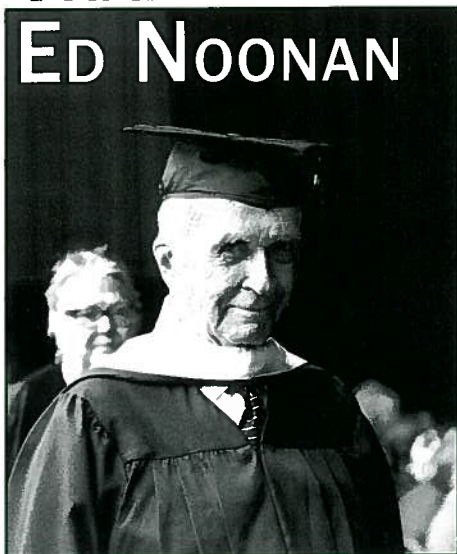
**PROTECTING CHILDREN
WHO ARE ABDUCTED BY
A PARENT**

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Alumni News | Graduation Weekend | Interview with Susan Henking

From the President's Desk

THANK YOU ED NOONAN



I've given a number of speeches in the past weeks about my Shimer Interim. Although it's been a provisional period for Shimer, it's also been profoundly transformative both for Shimer and for me. Here are a few of the most important things I have learned:

1. People here are always reading, even while walking. If you put up mirrors so you can see what's coming around the corner, it helps minimize the number of people who run into you.

2. People here take others seriously, but they don't take themselves too seriously.

3. People here make community. They create bonds with each other, mediated by the texts they read and the activities in which they engage together.

4. And best of all, you can carry it all with you when you leave.

Thank you, Shimer. We'll stay in touch.

Ed Noonan

SYMPOSIUM NEEDS A MAKEOVER

We're going on a short hiatus until Spring 2013. Keep reading the e-newsletter for the latest news, stories, and photos from Shimer.

Do we have your email?

alumni@shimer.edu or 312-235-3512

Meet Susan Henking

INTERVIEW WITH THE NEW PRESIDENT

Dr. Susan Henking joined Shimer as President on July 1, 2012. A few weeks before beginning her appointment, she talked with Symposium about her philosophy of leadership, her plans for Shimer, and her favorite childhood library books.

Q Can you tell us a little about how your past professional and scholarly successes have led you to Shimer?

A My paths to Shimer are multiple; in fact, they converge in a way that makes Shimer a wonderful opportunity for me. First and foremost, I am a first-generation college goer, whose own background led me somewhat serendipitously to where I am today. I followed friends (and financial aid) to Duke where I got what I like to think of as an inadvertent liberal education, and then went to the University of Chicago where I learned an enormous amount about liberal education through my experience working with, most notably, Donald Levine, Peter Homans, J. Z. Smith, and Bert Cohler. My work on sociology and on religious studies has always been about how ideas shape the world and are shaped by the worlds within which they emerge. Of course, that is my formal educational trajectory: these are the institutions where I fell in love with undergraduate teaching,

with the idea of reading major works, and with the notion that reading and writing are deeply entangled ways to think about and act in the world. And, most crucially, I learned to link the intellectual arena to the drive to make the world a more just place.

In terms of my scholarship, I was drawn to the history of major intellectual forces such as the rise of sociology. I'm interested in the ways contemporary culture is shaped by its major metaphors in considering such topics as AIDS and the ways our worlds are made from loss. I was also drawn to the model of the scholar/teacher because it includes a forceful recognition that excellent scholarship is shaped by the classroom and an excellent classroom is shaped by the community of inquiry that is scholarship. I came to value what is often called "the public intellectual": someone who makes use of her or his education and intellectual work, who remembers that ideas do not belong to the ivory tower but to the world.

Of course, I was able to recognize what I found in my own experiences of higher education and at Shimer in part because of other aspects of my background as well. My mother was an indiscriminant reader: Karl Barth's work on Romans sat on a shelf next

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PROTECTING CHILDREN WHO ARE ABDUCTED BY A PARENT

by Carol S. Bruch '60

For almost 40 years, I have employed the analytical skills I learned at Shimer in the field of family law. During the past twenty, this has led to several publications that identify sloppy—even dishonest—scientific assertions that seek to influence child custody decisions. Most recently, my concern has turned to the harm that public misperceptions now have on cases that are controlled by the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, and it is those difficulties that I wish to outline here.

The Convention states that children's interests are paramount and that its provisions therefore seek to return abducted children promptly to their country of

“Today, approximately 70% of abductors are custodial parents, usually mothers returning to their countries of origin.”

habitual residence. Not surprisingly, the Convention became known for the goal of prompt return. Yet the remedies the drafters crafted demonstrate a somewhat different priority, one that has since become vital to abducted children's welfare.

The typical abductor in 1980 was a noncustodial parent, and the children were, as in other custody cases, quite young, mostly under six years of age. To reunite these children with their former caregivers, the Convention gave these parents a right to their children's prompt return. Yet when custodial parents were the abductors, left-behind parents were given no such right. Instead, the Convention's sole remedy was assistance in securing visitation.

Taken together, it is clear that the Convention does not always call for children's return. But it does always protect the child's custodial household. And 30 years later, the importance of this distinction is clear.

While the Convention has greatly reduced noncustodial-parent abductions between the almost 90 nations in which it is in force, the identity of a typical abductor

has changed. Today, approximately 70% of abductors are custodial parents, usually mothers who are returning to their countries and families of origin. The children remain, as before, mostly young.

A typical case should therefore no longer produce a return order. Instead, children who have been abducted should usually remain at their new locations with their primary caregivers, and assistance with visitation should be the typical remedy in return proceedings. And, as has been the case throughout, the legal remedies that exist for non-Convention proceedings are available to noncustodial parents who seek the custody of their children. Known as litigation “on the merits” (i.e., dealing with custody itself, not simply the child's return or international assistance with visitation), these cases are heard in a different proceeding, either at a child's new location or, if jurisdictional rules permit, at its former residence. But if trial takes place at the child's former home, even a successful noncustodial parent will face a second, perhaps insurmountable, hurdle: the judgment must be honored at the child's new location.

The Convention's scheme is, however, now often ignored, and I conclude that the cause lies in increasing solicitude for noncustodial parents and a corollary tendency to “split the baby,” both of which are based in doctrines that emphasize equality between the parents rather than the best interests of children. As I explain in my article, “Sound Research or Wishful Thinking?,” this shift in focus is reinforced by widespread misconceptions concerning young children's needs that can be traced to mental health professionals who seek employment as expert witnesses for noncustodial parents and to fathers' groups. I refer to beliefs that even when parents live apart and are in high conflict (the typical situation when there is custody litigation), an infant or young child's psychological and emotional well-being requires that both nevertheless be heavily involved in its care.

The upshot is custody orders that significantly increase the amount of time awarded to a parent who has not previously provided the child's primary day-to-day care, and arrangements that are labeled joint custody even when significant time shares are not involved. The consequence in Convention cases is returns at the request of parents who do not provide day-to-day care

INTERNSHIPS

Five students received stipends for summer internships, thanks to the generosity of Ed Walbridge '56 and other alumni.

- **Dorian Gombert '14:** Emergent Order in Austin, TX; author Virginia Postrel in Los Angeles
- **Brad Kratwurst '13:** Richmond Public Library in Virginia
- **Naomi Neal '13:** Tryon Farm Institute of Michigan City, IN
- **KC Stresak '13:** Growing Power in Chicago
- **Ed Vlcek '14:** Chicago Honey Co-op

My First Day as an Urban Beekeeper

An excerpt from the Shimer blog

by Ed Vlcek '14

[...] It may seem a bit unusual for a Shimerian to choose to learn the fine art of beekeeping, but I have for years had a fascination with agriculture and the bugs that make it happen. I chose to intern as an urban beekeeper as a way to explore how we can alter the content of our daily lives practically and in immediate (and often delicious) ways. Bees are in many ways at the forefront of the shift toward more sustainable, urban-based food. In learning how they live and work, I hope to learn how to live and work in new ways as well. Founder of the Catholic Worker Movement Peter Maurin said that “scholars must become workers so that workers may be scholars.” Maybe that's my guiding principle this summer.



Read more about Ed's and the other interns' experiences:
<http://bit.ly/ShimerBlog>

me very much of Shimer students: serious yet playful and intellectually adventuresome. But I must also thank Shimer for exposing me to the essentials of collaborative—that is to say, true—education. Though I admit that being a “facilitator” rather than a “professor” is difficult; nevertheless, it is my Shimer experience that prepared me to undertake this ongoing experiment. It gives me great joy to help these students learn to phenomenologically “read” experience so that they can begin to appreciate its inexhaustible meanings, just as Shimer taught me how to appreciate the richness of the various texts we explored around its octagonal tables so many years ago.

PROTECTING CHILDREN (CONT.)

and are in essence noncustodial parents.

This happens through misapplications of a Convention rule that gives each parent in a joint custody case the right to seek his or her child's return, the same right that a sole custodial parent has. This joint custody rule made sense in 1980, when the term was new and denoted essentially equal caretaking. It no longer does, however, and inappropriate returns are now granted whenever courts fail to restrict the Convention's joint custody rule to orders that require substantially equal childcare. Worse, as in a 2010 U.S. Supreme Court case (*Abbott v. Abbott*), courts sometimes even call it joint custody if a visiting parent also holds some legal rights but does not provide day-to-day care and the existing order grants sole custody to the children's primary caregiver.

Both of these misapplications permit visiting parents to seek return orders and disrupt the child's primary attachment relationship, a relationship that is distinct from others in ways that are vital to the optimal development of infants' and young children's brains. (Secondary relationships assume their developmental importance somewhat later.)

I have been deeply concerned by these cases, which exacerbate what were already unacceptably high return rates of children into situations that place them at grave risk of serious physical or psychological harm or are otherwise intolerable (e.g., when they will be sent into hiding because there are death threats against their caregiver). In this country, for example, a National Institute of Justice (NIJ)-funded study led by Jeffrey L. Edleson looked at return cases being heard that contained allegations of domestic violence. They found that 92% involved American mothers returning to

the US, with 80% of those seeking return being foreign fathers. More than half of the children were returned, and custody of all but one was awarded to these allegedly abusive men. Article 13 of the Convention does not require returns that threaten danger to children, but the US State Department has long supported them. (See, for example, the position argued on its behalf in a 1998 trial court decision in *Blondin v. Dubois* that has become known as “Blondin I”).

Ironically, these changes have taken place at the same time that human development scholarship on child-parent attachment and neurobiological research on the developing brain provide ever-stronger support for the drafters' scheme. The brain research also clarifies why return orders that disrupt the primary attachment bond or return children into other forms of danger can turn the Convention, which was promulgated to protect them, into an engine of harm.

Recognizing the relevance of that scholarship to abduction cases, when I served as an official observer some months ago at a week-long meeting of Convention nations to review the Abduction Convention's operations, I invited participants to a noontime presentation, “Attachment, Brain Science and Abducted Children.” My goal was to remind them of the Convention's scheme as drafted and introduce them to materials they were otherwise unlikely to encounter.

I began with a classic 1969 film by British developmental psychologists James and Joyce Robertson that documents a delightful 17-month-old child's dramatic decline during nine days in a 24-hour nursery while his mother is in the hospital at the time of her second child's birth. My stated goal was to let the child “speak” directly about his experience to my audience. These Convention professionals may sometimes separate young children from their primary attachment figures, even sending them into foster care if, as sometimes occurs, social services at their former home refuse to place them with an abuser who has secured their return.

Although John's father visited him daily and the nurses who cared for him were kind, his separation from his primary attachment figure, his mother, caused a cascade of reactions. John's efforts to find solace with the favorite blanket that he had brought from home, one of the nursery's gigantic teddy bears, and Mary (a nurse) were all unavailing. His initial eagerness to see whether his father appeared when the nursery door opened

ceased, as did his attempts to leave, either by trying to open the door himself as he waved good-bye or by bringing his outdoor shoes to his father. Beginning on the fourth day, John stopped eating. On the sixth day, he began to cry nonstop. By the seventh, his cry had become weak and pitiful. He retreated under his blanket and no longer sought Mary's attention. By the eighth day, he had become apathetic.

Although John was not yet able to express his sadness in words, the depth of his depression was clear and extremely painful to watch. Then, on the ninth day, when his mother appeared to fetch him, he screamed, flailed, and struggled to get away from her. Only after his father arrived and John escaped into his arms did he even look directly at her, the person with whom he had held such a close and loving relationship just a week before.

After the film, I summarized important findings from a US life-span study of more than 17,000 people that suggest profound consequences for those who had encountered specific Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE), that is, exposure to a household with alcohol and drug abuse, mental illness or a battered mother, or exposure to psychological, physical, or sexual abuse. They range from increased health problems such as heart disease, cancer, and chronic lung disease to a shortened life span. And those with 4 or more ACE had a 4- to 12-fold higher risk for substance abuse, depression, and suicide attempts, as well as a 2- to 4-fold higher risk for smoking, poor self-rated health, sexually transmitted disease, and 50 or more sexual intercourse partners. Most significantly for my purposes, the behavior of infants who have been exposed to violence appears much like John's, whose sole adverse experience was the absence of his mother for a week: they exhibit eating and sleeping problems, decreased responsiveness to adults, and increased crying.

Further, because a healthy brain develops in a precise sequence that depends on the presence of appropriate stimuli at specific times, when this fails to take place, permanent deficits may result that affect a person's life-long functioning. That point was made with a slide showing cross-sections from two SPECT scans, one of a healthy six-year-old's brain and one of the brain of a six-year-old who had suffered severe emotional neglect. Large, completely black areas on the neglected child's scan indicating inactivity contrasted with the bright colors of brain

activity on the healthy child's scan. There was also significantly more activity in the neglected child's brain stem, a pattern that is correlated with a more impulsive, reactive brain and less recourse to the rational brain while under stress.

Neural plasticity may, fortunately, overcome some deficits through the creation of new neural pathways, as is often seen in the rehabilitation of stroke patients. But the degree to which it succeeds varies, and research suggests that a young child's best chances exist when optimal experiences are preserved or restored as quickly as possible.

In the context of the Abduction Convention, this happens when such a child remains or is returned to the protective care of its primary attachment figure, the very scheme the drafters established but which is currently under threat.

Carol acknowledges, with thanks, scientific materials provided by Linda Chamberlain, PhD, MPH and Barbara Hart, Esq. that she incorporated in her lecture. She also notes a helpful symposium on attachment and related brain science issues at [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1744-1617](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1744-1617), but cautions that the authors misunderstand the law and hence make flawed legal recommendations.

Carol S. Bruch '60 is Distinguished Professor Emerita and Research Professor of Law at the University of California, Davis. Carol Bruch's scholarship, expertise, and activism in the field of family law and marital property have shaped state, federal, and international law. Milestones in Bruch's career include her stint as the fourth woman in history to clerk at the United States Supreme Court.



Further information can be found at:

www.law.ucdavis.edu/faculty/Bruch



Ron Rothbart '66 Charlie's, Mt. Carroll, IL. June 2, 2010. "Used to be Poffy's (Poffenberger's Tavern), Shimer students' favorite bar in the 60's. Now frequented by students from the Campbell Center for Preservation Studies located on Shimer's former campus."

ALUMNI NEWS

1950's

Deborah Sperberg '59 was awarded an Alumni Service Award by the Shimer College Alumni Association.

1960's

Redd Griffin '60 was recently named a member of the 2012 class of "60 over 60" by Celebrating Seniors. He was honored for his volunteerism and charity in Oak Park, IL.

Sydney Spiesel '61 was awarded an Alumni Service Award by the Shimer College Alumni Association.

Phyllis Westberg '62 was awarded an Alumni Service Award by the Shimer College Alumni Association.

Laurie Spiegel '67 had her musical composition "Sediment" featured in the blockbuster movie *The Hunger Games*.

1970's

Bob Gray '70 recently published *The Elusive Wow: Searching for Extraterrestrial Intelligence*, available at Amazon.com and ElusiveWow.com.



Eric Allison '72

was elected to the Chair of the National Council for Preservation Education, the consortium of colleges and universities offering degrees in historic preservation. His book, *Historic Preservation and the Livable City*, was published by John Wiley & Sons in January 2011.

Nancy Nickel '76 is the new Director of Marketing and Communications at Catholic Theological Union, a graduate school of theology and ministry located in Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood.

Sterling C. Scott '78 is the new CEO of Phototron, the hydroponic growing systems company behind the "grow your own" phenomenon.

IN MEMORIAM

Myrna Asher '51
Joan Blaine Bowers du Pont '36
Ayleen Bourdow '40
Eugene Edward Bull '48
Patricia Bullard '48
Albert "Alan" Copeland '66
Mary Lee (Berk) Dee '45
Katherine Ora (White) Elling '34
Joan A. Fridkin '48

Jean Fox '40
Robert E. Jordan (Former Faculty)
Mary Kneibler '41
Robert M. Lerner '57
Edgar Pigg (Former Trustee)
Mary Leimbach Ruwe '34
Audrey (Ewald) Seaberg '41
Anita (Watson) Witt '46
Frances (Ruter) Zumdaahl '41

Got married? Moved?

Began a new job?

Started grad school?

Had a baby?



LET US KNOW!

<http://bit.ly/Classnotes>