

## Ann W. Duncan, Goucher College, and Shayna Sheinfeld, McGill University



*Ann W. Duncan is assistant professor of religion at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland, and specializes in American religious history, intersections between religion and public life, and religion and the social sciences. Her past research, presentations, and publications have focused on religion and politics, American Christianity and wartime, American Civil religion, and religious understandings of motherhood and the family. She is the coeditor of the three-volume set Church-State Issues in America Today (Praeger, 2008). Duncan's current project, "From the Mother of God to the Mommy Wars: Motherhood and American Christianity," integrates interviews with Catholic, Quaker, and Mormon women with historical and theological perspectives on Christian and American motherhood. She holds a BA from Duke University and a MA and PhD (expected May 2010) from the University of Virginia.*



*Shayna Sheinfeld is a PhD candidate at McGill University in Montréal, Québec, in the field of early Judaism. Her area of research lies in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphic texts of the second temple and post-temple periods, with an emphasis on apocalyptic texts. Sheinfeld is especially interested in the development of social history and Jewish identities of the period, including early Christianity and Rabbinics. In addition, she conducts research within Jewish studies, most specifically on women and their role in Judaism. She is the current coeditor of Arc , the journal for the faculty of religious studies at McGill University. Sheinfeld holds a BA in*

*religious studies from DePaul University and a MTS in Scripture, interpretation, and Jewish studies from Harvard Divinity School.*

As media coverage and recent popular publications on the subject show, the struggle to balance family and career continues to prove difficult and, at times, contentious for many individuals. Academia presents both a flexible career path with the potential to allow for the successful balance of career ambitions and family life and a fertile ground for the sacrifice of the latter for the sake of the former. Examination of this subject by those within academia frequently focuses on often unstated expectations for faculty members in terms of the size of their family and the timing of pregnancy and childbirth. Books such as *Mama, PhD: Women Write about Motherhood and Academic Life* (Rutgers University Press, 2008) and recent articles in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* discuss the ways in which changing the culture of the academic world, adding flexibility to tenure, teaching, advising, and committee responsibilities may help academics with various family responsibilities lead more whole and balanced lives. However, such discussions leave graduate students out of the equation despite the fact that this segment of the academic community is often of prime child-bearing age and enjoys even less flexibility, financial security, or authority than their faculty counterparts.

These realities demonstrate that recognizing the particular challenges of parenthood in graduate school and providing student parents with support must be the first step in fostering a healthy environment for both the current and the next generation of scholars. This conviction arises from our own experiences as mothers and graduate students:



**Shayna:** When I began my PhD program, my children were aged eight, five-and-a-half and two — I had our youngest daughter while my husband was working on his Masters degree, in between my Masters and PhD. My current department has been very understanding of the periodic complications that arise in attending meetings and classes and having children. While I do not pretend that balancing my work in a full-time graduate program along with a busy home life is not difficult, it is something that I find rewarding, albeit exhausting.



## Resources

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MacDonald, Joan Rmage, and Maura E. Sullivan. “[Mothers in the Field](#).” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (24 October 2008).

Mason, Mary Ann. “[Is Tenure a Trap for Women?](#)” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (22 April 2009).

\_\_\_\_\_. “[Role Models and Mentors](#).” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (25 March 2009).

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