



WALTER H. CAPPS CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF  
ETHICS, RELIGION, AND PUBLIC LIFE

For immediate release:  
January 28, 2013

Contact: Dr. Leonard Wallock, Associate Director  
Walter H. Capps Center for the Study  
of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life  
(805) 893-2317 / [leonard.wallock@cappscenter.ucsb.edu](mailto:leonard.wallock@cappscenter.ucsb.edu)

N E W S R E L E A S E

# Stefan Timmermans

## *Saving Babies?*

### *The Consequences of Newborn Genetic Screening*

Wednesday, February 20 / 8:00 p.m. / Free  
1104 Harold Frank Hall  
UCSB

S U M M A R Y F A C T S

- Stefan Timmermans, Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology, UCLA, and author of *Saving Babies? The Consequences of Newborn Genetic Screening*
- “*Saving Babies? The Consequences of Newborn Genetic Screening*”
- Wednesday, February 20 / 8:00 p.m. / FREE
- 1104 Harold Frank Hall, UCSB
- Information: Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB (805) 893-2317
- Digital copies of press materials available at <http://www.cappscenter.ucsb.edu/news/press-releases/>

**Description:**

It has been close to six decades since Watson and Crick discovered the structure of DNA and more than ten years since the human genome was decoded. Today, through the collection and analysis of a small blood sample, every baby born in the United States is screened for more than fifty genetic disorders. Though the early detection of these abnormalities can potentially save lives, the test also has a high percentage of false positives—inaccurate results that can take a brutal emotional toll on parents before they are corrected. Now some doctors are questioning whether the benefits of these screenings outweigh the stress and pain they sometimes produce. In *Saving Babies?*, Stefan Timmermans and Mara Buchbinder evaluate the consequences and benefits of state-mandated newborn screening—and the larger policy questions they raise about the inherent inequalities in American medical care that limit the effectiveness of this potentially lifesaving technology.

**Speaker Profile:**

Stefan Timmermans is chair and professor of the sociology department at UCLA. His research draws from medical sociology and science studies and uses ethnographic and historical methods to address key issues in the for-profit U.S. health care system. He has conducted research on medical technologies, health professions, death and dying, and population health. He is currently working on an ethnographic study of the expansion of newborn screening. His next projects will be about the community spillover effects of lack of health insurance and whole exome sequencing. His goal is to conduct robust qualitative research that reveals the invisible benefits and costs of the U.S. health care system. He is the author of *Sudden Death and the Myth of CPR* (Temple 1999), *The Gold Standard: The Challenge of Evidence-Based Medicine and Standardization in Health Care* (Temple, 2003, with Marc Berg), and *Postmortem: How Medical Examiners Explain Suspicious Deaths* (Chicago, 2006). His book *Saving Babies? The Consequences of Newborn Genetic Screening* (with Mara Buchbinder) is forthcoming from University of Chicago Press. He is also senior editor medical sociology for the journal *Social Science and Medicine*.

**Reviews of *Saving Babies? The Consequences of Newborn Genetic Screening*:**

"Smart, humane, and beautifully written, *Saving Babies?* is respectful but critical of clinicians, parents, and policymakers as it vividly connects the reader to the human tragedies on the page. Without being maudlin, Stefan Timmermans and Mara Buchbinder show us how newborn screening really works. Despite the grim subjects, this profound book is a real treat to read." - Carol A. Heimer, *Northwestern University*

"Recently expanded newborn screening for genetic disorders aims to enhance one of the triumphs of public health, right up there with vaccination and sanitation. But with millions of babies screened each year in all fifty states, one can lose sight of the fact that each family's situation is unique and that their perception of the screening program – its benefits, its anxieties, its unpronounceable disease names—will differ. Stefan Timmermans and Mara Buchbinder capture those individual stories with sensitivity and compassion. The clinical scenarios they describe, all true, are fascinating and eye-opening, revealing attitudes and responses by both the families and their physicians that are

often quite unexpected, but always poignant." - *Dr. Wayne W. Grody, M.D., Ph.D., UCLA School of Medicine*

**Sponsor:**

This event is presented by the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB.

**For more information, call  
UCSB Walter H. Capps Center for the  
Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life  
at (805) 893-2317**

**Editor: For color images,  
please call Dr. Leonard Wallock at (805) 893-2317.**