Dear Section Members,

Thanks to all of you for renewing your section membership. This year is off to a good start! As is the case every year, 2015 has begun with a flurry of activity for our section. Our local committee scouted venues for our joint reception with Body and Embodiment in Chicago, and we are now finalizing the arrangement. Our session organizers are busily selecting papers and speakers for roundtables and section-sponsored sessions. Our nominations committee recruited a wonderful group of scholars who will be running for office and ensuring the continuation of our leadership. And the award committees are considering the nominations that they received.

We are grateful to the council members and volunteers who are working on these various activities, as well as to everyone who submitted papers and nominations. It is through the collective efforts of our membership that we can remain a vibrant and exciting intellectual community!

In preparing this short text, it occurred to me to go back and read the statements that my predecessors wrote over the past decade or so—as it happens, since around the time that Massachusetts became the first U.S. state that implemented same-sex marriage in 2004. This proved to be fascinating. Over the course of this period, the Sexualities Chairs moved back and forth between highlighting hopeful signs of progressive sexuality-related change and noting dark moments when things seemed to be moving backward. That to me is indeed suggestive of the ways in which social and political debates surrounding sexualities have unfolded and continue to unfold.

Let me illustrate this by using marriage equality as an example. At the end of 2004, the year that the Massachusetts same-sex marriage law was implemented, Section Chair Verta Taylor lamented “the enshrinement … of discrimination against gays and lesbians in 11 new state constitutions that now ban same-sex marriage.” A year later, Tracey Ore noted that Christian Right organizations had chosen not to target the opening of Brokeback Mountain, a decision that perhaps signaled those organizations’ sense of shifting social attitudes toward LGBTQ people. In 2007, Tina Fetner puzzled over the Massachusetts legislature’s surprising vote to advance a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage (a measure that was later defeated). Then, in early 2009, Nancy Fischer expressed hope about the changes that the newly inaugurated Obama administration might bring about compared to the Bush years, which she described as “mostly dreadful in the realm of sexual politics.” At the same time, she reminded us that President Obama’s election had coincided with the passage of Prop 8 in California, which was read as an enormous defeat to gay and lesbian politics and the advancement of same-sex marriage in the U.S.
By 2010 and 2011, the movement for same-sex marriage seemed to be at a stalemate. Beth Schneider mentioned “the victories and defeats of same-sex marriage initiatives,” and a year later Mary Bernstein similarly talked about “gains and setbacks.” But by 2013, same-sex marriage was moving forward, especially as the balance had tilted in terms of the number of people in the U.S. who favored it. That year, Salvador Vidal Ortiz asked us to consider “what gets done, and undone, with marriage as a main political goal,” suggesting a need for greater nuance regarding LGBTQ politics.

This brings us to 2014, when we witnessed the accelerated expansion of same-sex marriage after the momentous Supreme Court ruling last June. Now same-sex marriage is legal in 37 states (20 more than just a year ago) and a Supreme Court ruling that could potentially legalize same-sex marriage nationally is expected this June. With this in mind, we asked section member Jeff Kosbie (J.D. and Ph.D. Candidate, Northwestern University) to provide a sociological perspective on the significance of the upcoming Supreme Court decision, which is included in this issue of Sexualities News.

Also included is an article on an equally important and current topic: the debates surrounding sexual assault and affirmative consent policies on U.S. college campuses. Our student representatives, Suzan Walters (Ph.D. Student, Stony Brook University) and Abigail Ocobock (Ph.D. Candidate, University of Chicago) interviewed three of our esteemed section members who have expertise in this area: Elizabeth Armstrong, Michael Kimmel, and Rebecca Plante. These interviews provide insight into the current and potential contributions of sociological scholarship to these debates, as well as how the topic of sexual assault on college campuses has been represented in the media.

I hope you enjoy reading our members’ perspectives! If you would like to propose a short article for the next issue of Sexualities News, please send an email to our fabulous editor Christin Munsch (christin.munsch@uconn.edu).

Héctor Carrillo, Northwestern University

“It is through the collective efforts of our membership that we can remain a vibrant and exciting intellectual community!” — Héctor Carrillo

DOES SAME-SEX MARRIAGE LITIGATION MAKE LGB PEOPLE “JUST LIKE” EVERYONE ELSE?

By Jeff Kosbie

On January 16, the Supreme Court announced that it would hear same-sex marriage cases coming from Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. Oral arguments will be the week of April 24, and we should expect a decision in June (at the end of the Court’s current term).

With the breathtaking uptake of same-sex marriage over the past five years, many of us are left trying to explain what this means—if anything—for LGB politics, social movements, and public opinion. Does same-sex marriage represent real acceptance of LGB people? Does it represent the triumph of the idea that gays are “just like” everyone else? I think one of the concerns that many of us share is that same-sex marriage litigation is an empty promise. Court decisions recognizing same-sex marriage paper over continued social inequalities. A recent study published in ASR found a difference in public support for formal rights and informal privileges for same-sex couples (Doan, Loehr, and Miller 2014). The public supported formal rights, like partnership benefits, more than they supported informal privileges, like public displays of affection. By reinforcing the multiple dimensions of prejudice, this study lent credence to concerns over how much impact legal recognition of same-sex relationships would have.

Turning to the motivations of same-sex couples getting married, we see that these questions are far from simple. On the one hand, many of these couples report that marriage itself is important, even when civil unions are available (Richman 2014). Marriage is embraced, at least in part, because it offers the opportunity to prove that lesbians and gays are just like everyone else. On the other hand, same-sex couples also describe their marriages as a form of political protest and a challenge to heteronormative expectations (Kimport 2013, Richman 2014).
In my research on the history of the LGBT legal field, I similarly find a complex set of meanings and motivations around marriage. My research suggests that a Supreme Court opinion could be used to force conversations about broader inequalities facing sexual minorities. That is, to make sexuality more relevant, not less relevant.

In the early 1970s, a trio of same-sex couples brought marriage cases in Minnesota, Kentucky, and Washington State. But these couples did not represent the neat, clean, assimilationist look that we’ve come to expect from same-sex marriage. To them, marriage litigation was a vehicle to challenge assumptions about gender roles, monogamy, and the state’s privileging of the marital relationship above all other family forms (Boucai forthcoming). They did not expect to win their cases, of course, but they used them to force public conversations about sexuality. The state ACLU affiliates offered some minimal support to these cases, but they were hesitant to get involved.

The next major round of same-sex marriage litigation took place in Hawaii. When same-sex couples there requested legal help (which all the major LGBT legal organizations initially denied), they reignited a debate over whether marriage was an appropriate goal for an LGBT movement. While same-sex marriage proponents now saw the possibility of winning same-sex marriage as a symbol that gay people are just like everyone else, they also still saw same-sex marriage litigation as a vehicle for challenging the state’s privileging of marriage and support of heterosexuality.

Another decade later, the National Center for Lesbian Rights got involved in its first same-sex marriage litigation after Mayor Gavin Newsom of San Francisco ordered the city to begin issuing marriage licenses. NCLR has a long history of work on supporting lesbian and gay families through child custody, adoption, partner benefits, and other litigation designed to expand the definitions of family. The eruption of same-sex marriage in California forced their hand in a sense. By getting involved in the marriage litigation there, they hoped to continue their work on expanding the definition of family.

What we see across these examples is that marriage does represent the triumph of the idea that LGB people are just like everyone else—for the advocates, for the public, for the couples getting married. But it also represents a challenge to heteronormative society and to the privileging of marriage as the single model for family.

After the Supreme Court overturned Texas’s sodomy law in Lawrence v. Texas, public support for sodomy decriminalization actually went down. Stephen Engel (2013) finds that this decrease was a result of the media reporting on Lawrence that consistently talked about it in terms of implications for same-sex marriage. Could something similar happen now? If the Court strikes the remaining bans on same-sex marriage, could we use that to force conversations on employment discrimination? Right now, the public largely assumes that employment discrimination against LGB people is illegal. But in many states it is not. In fact, in several states, LGB couples could legally get married and then legally be fired by an employer that did not approve of their marriage.

Predicting Supreme Court decisions is dangerous, but it seems unlikely that the Court will rule against same-sex marriage. The questions we need to be asking are how does this matter? For who? How can we make this matter?

References


Jeff Kosbie is a JD/PhD Candidate at Northwestern University. He researches how law is used to create and challenge inequalities around gender and sexuality. His dissertation tells the story of the development of the LGBT legal field.
SEXUAL ASSAULT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES:
THREE PERSPECTIVES

By Abigail Ocobock and Suzan M. Walters, Sexualities Section Student Representatives

The problem of campus sexual assault has received intense focus in government, the media, and on college campuses over the past year. Sexualities scholars have an important role to play in contributing to these debates and taking action to make campuses safer. We interviewed three Sexualities Section scholars who work on this issue to ask them what can be done to move the conversation forward. Here are excerpts from the interviews ...

Elizabeth Armstrong,
Professor of Sociology & Organizational Studies, University of Michigan.

AO: What do we know from recent sexualities scholarship that can help us make sense of sexual assault on college campuses?

EA: One of the reasons the issue is really intractable is that, like with many other aspects of gender and inequality, there are factors at play at different levels of society. The kind of multi-level framework that Barbara Risman and others have developed is very useful. We need to understand that this is something that's happening at the individual level, at the interactional level, and the organizational level. Language like “rape culture” can distract us from a bigger conversation. Beliefs about gender and sexuality really matter, but it’s also how these are put in action, and about organizational contexts where some people have resources and others don’t, and where some kinds of acts are penalized and others are not. That kind of organizational perspective is still is missing. The sociological research is still limited on this topic.

AO: Is there an alternative conversation that should be occurring in the media?

EA: There are lots of things that the media is not paying attention. The media does not focus on healing and recovery. They highlight horrific incidents, but then they don’t follow up and show how people recover. Women of color have also been invisible. Gay men are at higher risk of sexual violence on college campuses than any other group but their experiences don’t get much attention.

AO: What more could the sexualities scholarly community do to advance understanding of sexual assault?

EA: First, there is more we could be doing in our roles on college campuses. Those of us who teach classes on gender and sexuality often receive disclosures of sexual misconduct. So we need to be working very closely with other people on campus to figure out what our legal and ethical responsibilities are to our students in this rapidly changing environment. On most campuses faculty are now considered responsible employees, meaning that we are legally required to report disclosures of sexual misconduct to the Title IX officer and cannot maintain their confidentiality. But universities may also be able to designate particular faculty as confidential sources. We need to be very clear about whether we are confidential or responsible employees. We should also include information about student rights as provided by Title IX and campus resources in our syllabi.

EA: What [the media] is getting right is that it's paying attention, and that's incredible. But it doesn't always get the facts right. I was interviewed recently for the Washington Post and they conflated the statistic of one in five women being assaulted to one in five being raped. Those are not the same thing, and it completely wrecks the credibility of the story. To their credit, they corrected the error when asked, but too many stories are sensationalist, and journalists sometimes just cite each other without going back to the primary source material.

People who already have access to good data and who can get good information out there should be doing that. For example, Paula England just posted a blog on statistics on sexual assault from her Online College Social Life study. But we also need more research! We especially need more studies of men and ethnographic studies of campus cultures, so that we have a better understanding of what's going on at different types of schools and in different populations.
assault on college campuses?

MK: We know that there are certain kinds of conditions for sexual assault on campus and that sexual assault has different forms. One is party rape. We know that the majority of sexual assaults occur during the first few months of the year. From September through Thanksgiving vacation. **First year women are far more likely to be assaulted** than second, third, or fourth years.

Of course, **alcohol is the lubricant of sexual assault**. People often do not talk about who is doing the assaulting. Masculinities research about college men indicates that close to 95% of men never do this and those that do are serial rapists. They do it often and they do it because they feel they can get away with it.

SW: **This is an issue that people are getting a lot of information from mainstream media. What do you think the mainstream media has got right and what has it got wrong?**

MK: The media frenzy over sexual assault is analogous to the media frenzy about school shooters. With school shooters it’s always about the boys being mentally ill. The same is true about sexual assault. They are bad guys. What is not discussed in both of these cases is the culture in which it takes place.

If we keep thinking of sexual assault as individual bad apples, and all we have to do is get rid of the bad apples, we will never look at the basket in which the apples are held. We will never look at the permission that is given to the bad apples by the good apples. It seems to me that the conversation we need to have is the sociological conversation. Not to disaggregate rapists into individual mental illness, but to aggregate them into a pattern of what sexual assault on campus really looks like.

SW: **Is there an alternative conversation that should be occurring in the media?**

MK: As sociologists we can read power relationships by how people dress. For example, who dresses up for whom is a way to illustrate power. Walk into a college classroom and the men and women are dressed identical. They are all wearing jeans, sneakers, sweatpants, hoodies, whatever. By night, the guys are still dressed exactly the same way and the women are wearing skirts, high heels, and make up. **What does that tell us about power relations: During the day, relatively equal and during the night dramatically unequal.**

The American college classroom is a kind of microcosm of the unevenness of equality. In our formal institutions we are far more gender equal. Work places have rules **life is where inequality continues to reside.** That’s why I think that the college campus is a particular crucible for this.

SW: **What more could the sexualities scholarly community do to advance understanding of sexual assault?**

MK: Periodically, I think the sexualities section could produce press releases on relevant topics. Give the best empirical research. As a section we should put out a briefing for the media about how to think about sexual assault on campus. Give bullet points, citations, links, etc. **We can promote a sociological understanding, provide empirical foundation to the case, and push the media towards a more accurate representation.**

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RP: **When we are talking about heterosexual sexual assault one of the things coming to the forefront is that young men do not have the same understanding of what sexual assault is compared to young women.** Obviously this fundamentally creates some problems.

The other thing we are learning about young women is that our [sociologists’] definitions of sexual assault seem to differ from young women[’s]. We might look at a situation and think that it is rape or coercion. Young women, living in residential college settings, may say otherwise. What we are learning from sexualities scholarship is that **context matters.**

SW: **This is an issue that people are getting a lot of information from mainstream media. What do you
think the mainstream media has got right and what has it got wrong?

RP: What it has gotten right is shorter to answer. The media is giving airtime to the issue. The more mainstream media finds experts to talk about sexual assault, the more potential there is for a good perspective to be disseminated.

Mainstream media has tended to oversimplify what causes sexual assault on college campuses. There is little coverage of the ways young adults are navigating their sexualities in residential college settings. Media tend to portray sexual assault in two ways: either he raped her or she falsely accused him. In fact, there are many more complexities. It is complicated by each person’s internal narrative, intra-psychic scripting, and what they believe the sexual encounter is 'supposed' to be like. And it is complicated by the use of alcohol and other drugs that may blunt a person’s ability to read subtle signals from another person. It’s complicated by fairly entrenched gender socialization and we still do not have good mechanisms to talk to young men and women about sex. The media is missing all of this.

SW: Is there an alternative conversation that should be occurring in the media?

RP: Ideally people would be talking about how we collectively talk to developing young adults about sexualities. We need to be talking about the concept of intra-psychic scripting and of sexual self-hood. In addition, we need to be looking at the entire campus sexual climate. This includes everything that happens on the campus regarding sexualities, including how people can access birth control, how people talk about non-traumatic sexual events, and so on.

SW: What more could the sexualities scholarly community do to advance understanding of sexual assault?

RP: Within the long history of feminism, we have had missteps where feminism has stepped in to tell women they are oppressed. So we should be wary about defining situations for people. We cannot define their lived reality. On the other hand, there are profound emotional and physical consequences in the aftermath of sexual assault, whether the individual is aware they were harmed. The consequences can follow months or years later. This is the conundrum we are presented with.

One practical thing we can do happens when we get interviewed. We should have five bullet points and the bullet points should be a couple of sentences each, but we have to remind people that this is a complex issue. Wishing that it were more easily explainable does not make it so. This is about life-long gender socialization and socialization into our sexual selves. Meaningful understanding of sexual assault is much more broadly about campus sexual climates, and these climates come from our broader sociocultural sexual climate. When we talk about campus sexual climate we should be talking about climate change

Elizabeth A. Armstrong is co-author (with Laura T. Hamilton) of Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality (Harvard University Press, 2013). With Brian Sweeney, Hamilton and Armstrong published “Sexual Assault on Campus: A Multilevel, Integrative Approach to Party” in Social Problems (2006). Armstrong is beginning a new research project with Sandra Levitsky on how universities are responding to increased pressure from the federal government to prevent sexual violence and to better respond to its occurrence.

Michael Kimmel is Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Gender Studies at Stony Brook University, where he directs the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities. Kimmel’s books include Men’s Lives (9th edition, 2012), The Gendered Society (5th edition, 2013), Guyland (2008), and Angry White Men (2013). He consults regularly with the Ministries for Gender Equality in Norway and Sweden. He is a founder and Spokesperson for the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) and lectures extensively on campuses and in corporations in the U.S. and abroad.

Rebecca F. Plante is the author of Sexualities in Context: A Social Perspective; second edition to be published by Routledge in 2016. She is also co-editor, with L. M. Maurer, of Doing Gender Diversity: Readings in Theory and Real-World Experience (Westview, 2010). Her most recent book, Handbook of the Sociology of Sexualities (with John DeLamater), is forthcoming with Springer. She was invited to speak at the kickoff event for the “Yes Means Yes!” Positive Sexuality education series at Colgate University, and at LeMoyne College’s "Sexual Assault Awareness Month" main event.

Abigail Ocobock is a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Chicago.

Suzan M. Walters is a Ph.D. Student at Stony Brook University.
SEXUALITY RESEARCH AND SOCIAL POLICY CALL FOR PAPERS: SPECIAL ISSUE, “THE PERSISTENCE OF NEOLIBERALISM”

Guest Editors: Patrick R. Grzanka (University of Tennessee), Emily S. Mann (University of South Carolina), and Sinikka Elliott (North Carolina State University); Editor-in-Chief: Jeffrey T. Parsons (CUNY Graduate Center)

The politics of academic “buzzwords” are well documented by sociologists of science, who note that certain concepts become pervasive in scholarly discourse due to a number of contextual and social factors that may have little to do with the substance of the concept itself (Davis, 2008). “Neoliberalism” has experienced tremendous uptake across the humanities and social sciences since its initial articulation in a series of key publications by geographer David Harvey (2005), political theorist Lisa Duggan (2003), and sociologist Randy Martin (2002). As it has traveled, neoliberalism has been elaborated as a form of political economy, cultural politics, policy-making, and aesthetics. Likewise, the impact of neoliberal social policies and ideologies have been studied for their domestic and global implications for virtually all elements of social life, from humor (Grzanka & Maher, 2012) and reality TV (Couldry, 2008) to sex education (Elliott, 2014), public education (Soto & Joseph, 2010), hate crimes law (Spade, 2011), and gay neighborhood policing (Hanhardt, 2008, 2013). Queer studies has been particularly influential in mounting critical perspectives on the influence of neoliberalism in a so-called “post-gay” era of identity politics (Ghaziani, 2011), as mainstream lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) social movements in the U.S. and Europe took a homonormative turn that embraced assimilation and consumerism over radical social action and coalition-building across boundaries of race, gender identity, citizenship, and social class (Duggan, 2002; Ferguson & Hong, 2012).

The widespread deployment of neoliberalism in social and cultural criticism has inspired some to declare the end of neoliberalism’s relevance due to its heterogeneous re-articulation, rendering the term a trendy, empty signifier (e.g., the “Kill this Keyword?” panel at the 2014 American Studies Association annual meeting). But as neoliberalism’s material effects continue to reverberate across diverse social worlds, is neoliberalism really “over”? What are the consequences of a “post-neoliberal” turn in a global era of continued deregulation, privatization, and stratification? And how might neoliberalism fatigue disguise a more politically insidious impulse to divert attention away from critical projects that target social inequalities, particularly intersecting inequalities of race, gender, class, and sexuality?

This special issue of Sexuality Research and Social Policy engages the persistence of neoliberalism as a perhaps over-deployed but still-powerful form of critical inquiry, particularly for sexuality and queer studies. We encourage submissions from scholars working in diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts whose work engages neoliberal socio-political formations that have important consequences for how we conceive of sexuality and sexual politics in the late 20th and early 21st century. We solicit paper proposals that are theoretical/conceptual and/or empirical on a wide range of topics relating to sexuality, policy, and neoliberalism, including:

- Public health, including sexually transmitted infections and vaccines
- Same-sex marriage
- Sexual behavior
- Reproductive rights and justice
- Intersectionality and queer theory
- LGBT consumers, marketing, and economic policies, including regulations and deregulation
- Terrorism, torture, and mass incarceration
- Methods (i.e., how to study sexuality in and neoliberalism)
- Violence, including rape culture
- Community organizing, political resistance
- New and emergent sexual orientation and gender identity categories
- Law and critical criminology

Though we conceive of this special issue in broad terms related to SRSP’s mission of “sexuality research and social policy,” we are especially interested in paper proposals that address (a) how neoliberalism and neoliberal policies continue to matter for sexuality and intersecting forms of inequality in the United States and worldwide, and (b) how critiques of neoliberalism can inform social justice efforts domestically and globally. Finally, all proposals should address the work’s implications for social policy and social transformation.

The editorial team is committed to a substantive and timely review process for all proposals. The submission process will be as follows: first, authors will submit brief proposals. Accepted proposals will receive notification and editorial guidance/support throughout the spring and summer of 2015. Complete manuscripts will be submitted in late-summer 2015 and go through a blind, peer-review process. Accepted manuscripts will be published online before completion of the special issue, which is planned for 2016.

Proposals should be no more than 500 words, not including references. Proposals should be emailed to patrick.grzanka@utk.edu by April 1, 2015. Include disciplinary home and institutional affiliation for all authors.
RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES


RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS


Hayes, Rebecca M., Kate Luther, and Susan Caringella, eds. Teaching Criminology at the Intersection: A How-to Guide for Teaching about Gender, Race, Class and Sexuality. Routledge, 2014.


PROPOSED SEXUALITIES SECTION MENTORING PROGRAM: CALL FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

The student representatives (Abi Ocobock and Suzan Walters) are setting up a pilot mentoring program. The goal is to connect PhD students with faculty members in the section and support them in establishing ongoing mentoring relationships beyond their PhD institution. Mentors and mentees will be matched together based on particular areas of interest and/or mentoring needs. We cannot guarantee that there will be mentors available for all interested students but we will do our best to meet demand. If you are interested in being assigned a faculty mentor in the section, please email Abi Ocobock at aocobock@uchicago.edu by March 1st. In the email indicate:

- Your institution
- What stage of the PhD program you’re at
- Particular research interests you would like mentorship on
- Other types of activities you would like mentorship on (e.g. getting published, networking, research, job placement, etc.)
- What kinds of professional positions you’re interested in pursuing (research focused, teaching/liberal arts, positions outside academia)
- A sentence or two about why you think you’d benefit from having a faculty mentor in the section.
MARTIN P. LEVINE MEMORIAL DISSERTATION FELLOWSHIP

The Martin Levine Memorial Dissertation Award was established to honor the memory of Martin Levine, who died of AIDS in 1993. It provides $3,000 to a graduate student (and $500 to an honorable mention) in the final stages of dissertation research and writing, who is working on those topics to which Levine devoted his career: 1) the sociology of sexualities, 2) the sociology of homosexuality, and 3) HIV/AIDS research. It is designed to help students complete their dissertations, and as such the committee evaluates dissertation proposals rather than completed work. In accordance with ASA policy, all award nominees must be current members of the association in order to be considered. In addition, nominees must join the section if they are not already members. Send your proposals to: Michael Kimmel (michael_kimmel@yahoo.com), Department of Sociology, SUNY at Stony Brook, Stony Brook, NY 11794. The deadline for submissions is April 1, 2015.

THANK YOU, 2014-2015 SEXUALITIES SECTION LEADERSHIP!

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