Austin Summit on LGBT Families Report

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As demonstrated by the recent amicus brief filed by the American Sociological Association, research on LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) families is a time-sensitive issue with important implications for gay and lesbian couples and their children's civil and legal rights. Sociologists must pioneer ways to study LGBT families ethically and scientifically in order to effectively engage in these political and policy debates.

In April, sociologists Jennifer Glass, Gloria Gonzalez Lopez, and Debra Umberson organized a group of leading interdisciplinary scholars at the University of Texas-Austin for the inaugural “Austin Summit on LGBT Families.” Panelists included: Lee Badgett, keynote speaker Gary Gates, Mark Hatzenbuehler, Kathleen Hull, Ellen Lewin, Wendy Manning, Ian Meyer, Mignon Moore, Charlotte Patterson, Esther Rothblum, and Stephen Russell.

Summit panelists discussed cutting-edge research on same-sex intimate relationships and parenting; raised ethical, methodological, and policy concerns involved in studying LGBT families; and identified key topics for future research. We report here on some of the themes that emerged from the Austin Summit.

Given the recent decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court, many questions remain concerning same-sex marriage. How will legal recognition affect same-sex couples and the well-being of children raised by LGBT individuals? Additionally, will same-sex couples change the institution of marriage (e.g., could marriage equality change the division of labor within different-sex unions)? Comparative research in countries with legal same-sex marriage could uncover how marriage equality might affect LGBT families in the United States.

Research Complications

Cutting-edge research is currently examining meanings of marriage and marriage expectations within LGBT communities in the United States. However, scholars studying LGBT families and marriage need to pay attention to how age and life-course position, socioeconomic status, geographic region, race, and legal diversity, migration experiences and citizenship status, religion, and gender variations contribute to the complexities of family in people's lives. Researchers must accurately represent the experiences of and diversities within LGBT families while remaining keenly aware that their research may be used in ways that re-stigmatize these marginalized populations.

Little is known about how differing pathways to adulthood (e.g., conception via artificial insemination) affect child well-being in LGBT families. Previous research has often overlooked fostering and adoption through the child welfare system as a parenting pathway, causing sociologists to overlook how economic privilege and racial-ethnic status may also contribute to who has access to different forms of conception and family formation. Research in this area has also largely focused on lesbian mothers, while sociologists know much less about gay fathers or bisexual and transgender parents.

Funding agencies often remain reluctant to support research on LGBT populations and, as a result, most research in this field has relied on small “convenience” samples. However, new technologies and partnerships with community-based organizations can open doors to different LGBT family populations. The use of longitudinal sibling comparison data is also a novel methodological approach that allows researchers to control a host of characteristics and alleviate selection issues in convenience sampling.

Additionally, varying marriage and civil union policies at the state level provide researchers the opportunity to conduct natural experiments. Lastly, sociologists who study LGBT families need to find creative ways to link their scholarship to larger public discussions concerning LGBT families.

Visit <www.utexas.edu/cola/depts/sociology/the-austin-summit-on-lgbt-families/overview.php> to learn more about the Austin Summit and participating scholars.

Election

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and their appreciation to all ASA members who have served the Association by running for office and by voting in this election.

Close to half the voting members of the ASA community took part in the 2013 election. ASA is one of the very few scholarly associations with participation this high. Of the 9,374 members eligible to vote in the 2013 election, 47.8 percent did so, compared with 48.4 percent in 2012. In the 52 ASA Sections elections, 54.9 percent participated in 2013. Of the total votes cast, 100 percent were cast online.

The full slate of the newly elected ASA-wide officers and committee members as follows:

President-Elect
Paula England, New York University

Vice President-Elect
Cecilia Menjivar, Arizona State University

Council Members-at-Large
Patricia E. White, National Science Foundation
Leslie McCall, Northwestern University
Karyn Lacy, University of Michigan
Tina Fetner, McMaster University

Committee on Nominations
Elizabeth A. Armstrong, University of Michigan
Francesca Polletta, University of California-Irvine
Monica McDermott, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign
Kathleen J. Ferraro, Northern Arizona University
Maxine Leeds Craig, University of California-Davis
Dawn T. Robinson, University of Georgia

ISA World Congress in Yokohama, Japan, July 2014

The International Sociological Association (ISA) will hold its XVIII World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama, Japan, on July 13-19, 2014. The theme is “Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for Global Sociology” and features sessions focusing on inequalities in different social contexts and situations in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent, and globalized world.

The World Congress is held every four years. Since the 1980s, the ISA has applied for and received a block grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to support travel, thereby ensuring a strong presence of U.S. scholars in this important venue. The ASA submitted a proposal to NSF in June 2013 for funds for travel support to the 2014 World Congress. The ASA Executive Office will administer the travel program, if funded. In administering the travel grant, the ASA places emphasis on encouraging young scholars, underrepresented minorities, persons with disabilities, and women to apply for travel support.

Competitive criteria for an award include an invitation or acceptance of a paper, the scientific merit of the paper, and the qualification of the applicant. The deadline for submission of abstracts for all ISA Research Committees is September 30, 2013. See the Calls for Submissions of the ISA Research Committees at <www.isa-sociology.org/congress2014/>. 