

# SBPC

## Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities Division of SSSP Fall Newsletter

### LETTER FROM THE DIVISION CHAIR CORIE HAMMERS

**I want to thank everyone** for making the 2011 SSSP meeting in Las Vegas such a success. Thank you for your participation and contribution! Let's be sure to make our upcoming 2012 annual meeting in Denver equally (if not more) successful. Certainly, our 2012 conference looks to be another exciting conference with the numerous sessions we have organized. We are collaborating with numerous other SSSP divisions and have six co-sponsored sessions set for 2012! These co-sponsored sessions include: *Sex/y Activism with Conflict, Social Activism & Change*, organized by Barbara Brents; *Black Men, Queer Visibility and Acceptance* with Racial and Ethnic Minorities, organized by Shandu Foster; *Constructing Sex Work with Poverty, Class and Inequality*, organized by Shawn Cassiman; *Sexual Minorities, Homophobia and Sporting Communities with Sport, Leisure and the Body*, organized by Elise Paradis; *Gender, Sexuality and the Law* with Law and Society, organized by Corie Hammers and Kim Richman; *Queer Families with Family*, organized by Elisabeth Sheff. In addition, we have three main sessions: Sex Work (thematic), organized by Sandra Schroer, Sexuality on the Edge, organized by Kathleen Asbury; and Public Sex/ualities, organized by Corie Hammers.

As we are well aware, the 2012 theme for this year's annual meeting is "**The Art of Activism**." According to SSSP President Wendy Simonds, this means thinking about the intersections of art and activism, both of which emerge out of "creative, passionate impulses," that "challenge convention." As I see it, this is a call to get us thinking about and recognizing the myriad ways in which we, as teachers, scholars, mentors and activists, perform art everyday—in our classrooms, with our students, through our scholarly pursuits, and in our communities outside the academy.

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These pursuits and daily exchanges are not merely intellectual. Rather, what we teach, how we teach, how we engage our students and the kinds of scholarly projects we choose to pursue are emotional and intimate forms of engagement, all of which are, on some level, about creating a more just world. If passion, inspiration, creativity, and connection are that which sustain communities, it is certainly no less true when it comes to our work. To that end, I look forward to the 2012 annual meeting, and the many exciting papers, presentations, panels and conversations that this theme—"the art of activism"—will no doubt inspire.

## New Division Member Publications

**Bernstein, Mary.** 2011. "United States: Multi-Institutional Politics, Social Movements and the State." Pp. 197-211 in *The lesbian a Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*, edited by Manon Tremblay, David Paternotte, and Carol Johnson. Surrey, England: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

**Hoefinger, Heidi.** 2011. "'Professional Girlfriends': An Ethnography of Sexuality, Solidarity and Subculture in Cambodia". *Cultural Studies*, 25(2) p 244-266.

**Koken, J.A.** (in press). Independent female escorts' strategies for coping with sex work related stigma. *Sexuality & Culture*.

**Pettinicchio, David.** 2011. "Public and Elite Policy Preferences: Gay Marriage in Canada." *International Journal of Canadian Studies*.

## Feature Essay: "The Problems With 'Post-Gay'"

~ Amin Ghaziani and Matt Brim

Gay life in the Western world today is so open that it may be moving "beyond the closet," says Steve Seidman, despite a persistent privileging of heterosexuality by the state, societal institutions, and popular culture. This mere possibility prompted British journalist Paul Burstn to coin the term "post-gay" in 1994 as an observation and critique of gay life. The term found an American audience four years later in 1998 when *Out* magazine editor James Collard used it in the *New York Times* to assert:

"We should no longer define ourselves solely in terms of our sexuality—even if our opponents do. Post-gay isn't 'un-gay.' It's about taking a critical look at gay life and no longer thinking solely in terms of struggle. It's going to a gay bar and wishing there were girls there to talk to."

What does it mean to be post-gay? And how is today's putatively post-gay era different from prior periods of sexual history? Not only do we attempt to clarify the meaning of this still-murky idea, we also seek in this essay to add a critical voice to the conversation. Much of the contemporary debate surrounding this concept assumes that LGBT people are better off in today's post-gay world than they were before it. Rather than accept this at face value, we offer pause with challenges to the thesis.

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## The Post-Gay Era

The defining features of the post-gay era emerge when we compare them against the prior closet and coming out eras, respectively. The heyday of the closet during the years before World War II was characterized by concealment (hiding who you are from family and friends); isolation (being disconnected from networks of other gay people); feelings of shame, guilt, and fear (internalizing societal views about homosexuality); and duplicity (living a double life). In contrast, the coming out era, which reigned from World War II to 1997, was typified by being open about one's sexuality; by constructing a world with almost exclusively gay social networks; and by feeling that "gay is good," a phrase that Frank Kameny coined in 1968. Finally, today's post-gay society is distinguished by an increasing assimilation of gays into the mainstream alongside a rapid internal diversification of LGBT communities.

Assimilation and diversity have been in perennial tension in gay life. Over the long course of gay history, but especially from 1950s homophile organizing onward, the gay imagination has routinely oscillated between a narrow, single-interest vision, rooted in conventional identity politics, that seeks an end to discrimination against gays, and an expansive, multi-issue, coalition view that is grounded in a political philosophy of intersectionality and social justice. Assimilation advocates argue that (1) integration increases choice for how to be gay; (2) it prevents urban ghettoization; and (3) it reconfigures the public-private split by allowing homosexuality to enter the public sphere. Diversity and distinction devotees counter that (1) assimilation is socially homogenizing and erases a unique gay sensibility that has been a source of cultural innovation in America; (2) assimilation is an illusion, since what we really have is a state of "virtual equality," in Urvashi Vaid's words; and that (3) a triumphalist view of assimilation downplays the reality of heterosexual dominance in matters of national and even international policy.

If this debate is cyclical, then what makes the post-gay era distinct? The answer, says Seidman, must be tentative, given the "slow and uneven but steady" pace of the change:

"Gay life today *is* very different than it was just a decade or two ago. Gay Americans today have more choices about how to live, and their lives often look more like those of conventional heterosexuals than those of the closeted homosexuals of the recent past . . . Gay life is defined by a contradiction: *many individuals can choose to live beyond the closet but they must still live and participate in a world where most institutions maintain heterosexual domination* (emphasis in original).

In the heyday of the era of the closet, individuals confronted stark choices: stay in or step out of the closet . . . Identity choices in the era of the closet were also stark: to deny or champion being gay as a core identity . . . Today, the choices are not as stark. Post-Stonewall coming-out motifs . . . are only one strand among many. As individuals live outside the closet, they have more latitude in defining themselves and the place of homosexuality in their lives."

Conversations about post-gay life often assume a naïve optimism. Consider the way in which a 2003 *USA Today* article celebrated gay assimilation:

"In addition to the Massachusetts ruling last month [*Goodridge v. Department of Political Health*, a 2003 state Supreme Court case that legalized same-sex marriage in Massachusetts], there are other recent milestones: In June, the high court's ruling in the Texas case effectively legalized gay sex nationwide [*Lawrence v. Texas*, a 2003 U.S. Supreme Court case that struck down sodomy statutes]. Last month, the Episcopal Church installed its first openly gay bishop. And *Queer Eye* is such a hit that NBC-owned Bravo just announced that *Gal Pals* will join the show on next fall's line-up. In it, fashion-challenged straight women will get the same gay-inspired makeovers as their heterosexual brethren. Cultural observers...link the popularity of gay characters in the media with the comfort level many Americans now feel toward lesbians and gay men."

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## SBPC Division Sessions, Annual Meeting, 2012

The following is a list of SBPC panels and sessions that are co-sponsored with other SSSP divisions that we hope you will find exciting. Please consider submitting your work to a panel, and we hope to see you in Chicago next summer!

### **Session 1: Thematic: Sex Work**

Organizer: Sandra Schroer

### **Session 2: Sexuality on the Edge**

Organizer: Kathleen Asbury

### **Session 3: Public Sex/ualities**

Organizer: Corie Hammers

### **Co-sponsored Sessions**

### **Session 1: Gender, Sexuality and the Law (Law & Society)**

Organizer: Corie Hammers, Kim Richman

### **Session 2: Black Men, Queer Visibility and Acceptance (Racial and Ethnic Minorities)**

Organizer: Shandu Foster

### **Session 3: Sex/y Activism (Conflict, Social Activism & Change)**

Organizer: Barbara Brents

### **Session 4: Sexual Minorities, Homophobia and Sporting Communities (Sport, Leisure and the Body)**

Organizer: Elise Paradis

### **Session 5: Constructing Sex Work (Poverty, Class and Inequality)**

Organizer: Shawn Cassiman

### **Session 6: Queer Families (Family)**

Organizer: Elisabeth Sheff

## Save The Date!

### SSSP 2012 Annual Meeting

**62nd Annual Meeting**

**August 16-18, 2012**

**The Grand Hyatt Denver Hotel  
Denver, CO**



**IN DEVELOPMENT...**

Publications  
in  
Press

**First comprehensive volume on Male Sex Work**

Harrington Park Press notes that it has under development the first comprehensive volume on "Male Sex Work and Society." It is under the editorship of two leading academics in this field, Dr. Victor Minichello and Dr. John Scott, both of the University of New England (Australia). Both have published extensively in this area. The volume will be interdisciplinary and international in scope, synthesizing empirical knowledge about male sex workers from the perspectives of sociology, mental health, social services, public health, history, popular culture, geography, marketing, and more. Original empirical data will be included.

Harrington Park Press is a re-launch specialty small press project headed by Bill Cohen, Founding Publisher of The Haworth Press, Inc. (now part of the Taylor & Francis Group/Routledge). Haworth published approximately 200 academic journals. The Senior Editor of Harrington Park Press is Dr. Richard Koffler, a thirty year veteran of academic publishing, and former Executive Director of the Association of American University Presses.

For the latest information, go to: [www.HarringtonParkPress.com](http://www.HarringtonParkPress.com)

## Call for Papers – Annual Graduate Student Paper Competition

***Deadline: April 11th, 2012***

The Sexual Behavior, Politics, and Communities Division announces the 2012 Graduate Student Paper Competition. Papers may be empirical and/or theoretical, and they may be on any aspect of sexuality, including sexual behavior, sexual identity, sexual politics, sex law, political activism, or sexual communities. The winner will receive a stipend of \$100, payment of the winner's SSSP registration fee for the 2012 SSSP meeting (to help the winner attend the meeting), and a ticket to the awards banquet. The winner will be expected to present their winning paper at one of the SBPC sessions being held as part of the 2012 SSSP meeting.

To be eligible, a paper must meet the following criteria: 1) The paper must have been written between January 2011 and March 2012; 2) The paper may not have been submitted or accepted for publication (papers that have been presented at a professional meeting or that have been submitted for presentation at a professional meeting are eligible); 3) The paper must be authored by one or more students, and not co-authored with a faculty member or colleague who is not a student; 4) The paper must not exceed 35 pages including notes, references, and tables; 5) The paper must be typed using 12 point font in either Times New Roman or Courier; and 6) The paper must be accompanied by a letter from a faculty member at the student's college or university nominating the paper for the SBPC Division Student Paper Competition.

Students should send via email, with no identifying information on any part of the paper; and a letter of nomination from a faculty member to: Dawn Baunach, Ph.D., Email: [dbaunach@gsu.edu](mailto:dbaunach@gsu.edu), Georgia State University, Department of Sociology, Atlanta, GA, 404-413-6525.



## CALL FOR CHAPTERS

### Intersecting Contradiction? Queering Religion, Religious Queers

Yvette Taylor and Ria Snowdon (eds)

***\*\* Deadline for Abstracts: 06 January, 2012 \*\****

This collection will consider how religious identity interplays with other forms and contexts of identity, specifically those related to sexual identity (Stein, 2001; Yip, 2005; Taylor, 2009). It asks how these intersections are formed, negotiated and resisted across time and places: 'contradictions' are both privately and publically inhabited in the context of legislative change and increasing, but often competing, socio-legal recognition. Considerations of 'sexual citizenship' are still positioned as separate from and indeed negated by, religious rights. Questions around 'queer' engagements in civil partnerships and other practices (e.g. adoption) have created a number of provoking stances and policy provisions – but what remains unanswered is how people experience and situate themselves within sometimes competing, or 'contradictory', moments (Weeks, 2001, 2007) as 'religious queers' who may be tasked with 'queering religion'.

Additionally, the presumed paradoxes of 'marriage', queer sexuality, religion and youth combine to generate a noteworthy generational absence. In looking at interconnectedness, this collection seeks international contributions which bridge the 'contradictions' in queering religion and in making visible 'religious queers'. It hopes to offer insight into older and younger people's understandings of religiosity (where Anglican-based LGBTQ organisations are also demonstrably those of 'older' adults), queer cultures, and religious groups. A small but active religious minority in the US has received much attention for its anti-gay political activity; much less attention has been paid to the more positive, supportive role that religious-based groups play in e.g. providing housing, education and political advocacy for queer youth (see Browne, Munt, Yip, 2010).

Queer methodologies (Browne and Nash, 2010) and intersectional approaches (Taylor et al., 2010), potentially offer a lens both theoretically and methodologically, to uncover the salience of related social divisions and identities: the collection hopes to be innovative and sensitive to 'blended' identities and their various enactments.

**Abstracts are invited to consider** the intersections (and contradictions) between religious and sexual identities, and their possible interplay with other forms of identity, groups, and contexts. This can include, but is not limited to:

- Intersecting inequalities: class, race, gender, sexuality
- Competing equalities, different diversities
- Generational (dis)continuity: past, present, and futures
- Mapping methods
- Queering youth: LGBTQ and heterosexual identities

If you would like to contribute to the collection, please send your abstract (Word document) along with a brief biography to Ria Snowdon ([snowdonr@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:snowdonr@lsbu.ac.uk)) and Yvette Taylor ([taylor@lsbu.ac.uk](mailto:taylor@lsbu.ac.uk)) by **06 January 2012**. First draft chapters (8,000 words) due January 2013.

<http://queerreligiousyouth.wordpress.com/call-for-chapters/>

## JOB POSTINGS

### University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

**\*\* DEADLINE: December 1, 2011 \*\***

The Department of Sociology and the Women's Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire invite applications for a tenure track faculty position with a **joint appointment in both departments** at the rank of Assistant Professor, beginning August 20, 2012. Applicants must possess a doctorate in Sociology, Women's Studies, Family Studies, LGBTQ Studies or related field from a regionally accredited higher education institution. ABD applicants must complete the terminal degree by May 21, 2013. Successful applicant will have expertise in both LGBTQ Studies and Family (either Family Sociology or Family Studies). Preference will be given to candidates with a demonstrated background in Sociology and Women's Studies. The successful candidate will be expected to teach three to four courses each semester (depending on class size) in the Department of Sociology and the Women's Studies Program, participate in research and scholarly activities, provide academic advising to students as assigned, engage in service to the university and community, and participate in department/program, college, and university committee work.

Candidates should submit electronic copies (PDF format, separate files for each item) of the following items:

\* Letter of application, Unofficial graduate school transcript (please provide titles for all independent readings and directed studies work), Curriculum Vita, Evidence of teaching effectiveness including copies of course evaluations (if available), Statement of teaching philosophy including a brief summary of teaching experience, Writing sample exemplifying your best scholarly work, **Three confidential letters of recommendation\***

\* Referents should submit confidential letters of recommendation directly to the committee. Please have letters sent by email or fax to: Search and Screen Committee, Women's Studies and Sociology, c/o Ms. Julie Westphal: [westphja@uwec.edu](mailto:westphja@uwec.edu). Send materials to Search and Screen Committee, Women's Studies and Sociology, c/o Ms. Julie Westphal: [westphja@uwec.edu](mailto:westphja@uwec.edu).

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### MELLON POSTDOCTORAL TEACHING FELLOWSHIPS

**\*\* DEADLINE: November 30<sup>th</sup> \*\***

In the Humanities and Humanistic Social Sciences 2012-2014 at the University of Pennsylvania.

The School of Arts and Sciences invites applicants for four two-year postdoctoral teaching fellowships in the humanities and humanistic social sciences. Fellows will teach one course per term. Eligibility is limited to applicants who will have received their Ph.D. within two years prior to the time they begin their fellowship at Penn (August, 2010 or later). We are especially seeking fellows in Anthropology, English, French, Music History, and Sexuality Studies and Queer Theory (with some knowledge of Trans Studies). For guidelines, see the School of Arts and Sciences website: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/deansoffice/Mellon>

#### Mail application to:

Jeffrey Kallberg  
Associate Dean for Arts and Letters  
Office of the Dean  
School of Arts and Sciences  
University of Pennsylvania  
1 College Hall, Room 116,  
Philadelphia, PA 19104-6377

Applicants will be asked to indicate their own preferences for a faculty mentor (with a list of three possibilities). The departments and the Dean's Office will find the best fit between an applicant and a mentor on the basis of faculty willingness and research interests. A mentor will be asked to agree to serve and to "sponsor" the applicant in the competition. The quality of match between sponsor and applicant will be an important criterion in the choice of applicant.

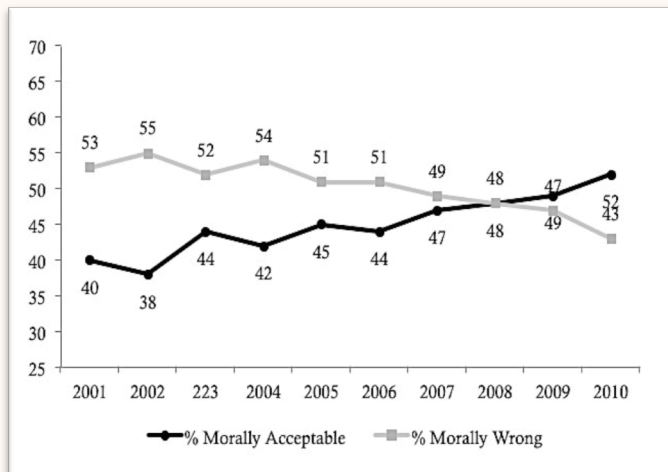
The fellows will be provided with an office by their departments; the Mellon funds will pay to provide them with a computer and printer. The chair and undergraduate chair of the department will work with each fellow on matters of teaching. However, each fellow will also be assigned a faculty mentor closely connected with the area of his or her research; that mentor will be responsible for ensuring that the fellow is connected to the research resources and community at Penn.

The fellows will also be affiliated with the Penn Humanities Forum and be invited to take a place in all of its activities, including the weekly seminars and programs, and so will also be connected to a wider community of humanities scholarship at Penn. The stipend for 2012-2013 is \$49,440. The fellows will also have a \$2,500 annual budget for research support during their appointment, to be used for research travel, conference travel, publication expenses, or stipends to student research assistants. They will receive single health, dental, and life insurance.

**Application process:** Completed application form, reference letters and supporting materials must be postmarked no later than **NOVEMBER 30, 2011**.

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This assimilation has advanced alongside a companion cultural acceptance. A 2010 Gallup poll found that “Americans’ support for the moral acceptability of gay and lesbian relations crossed the symbolic 50 percent threshold in 2010. At the same time, the percentage calling these relations ‘morally wrong’ dropped to 43 percent, the lowest in Gallup’s decade-long trend.”



What are the consequences of assimilation and acceptance? Do they signal a utopian decline in the significance of sexuality, or do they merely re-code and re-inscribe sexual inequalities? We think about such questions through a critical reading of the twin drivers of the post-gay impulse.

### The Diversity Critique

Post-gay life entails several ways to affirm oneself and one’s imagined community in a way that creates a feeling of belonging in a multicultural society. But underneath this veneer lies a troubling politics of normalization. The rhetoric and reality of the post-gay era resonates most with those lesbians and gay men “whose sexual behavior conforms to traditional gender norms, who link sex to intimacy, love, monogamy, and preferably marriage, and who restrict sex to private acts that exhibit romantic or caring capacity,” says Seidman. Those who are gender or sexually nonnormative become “a lightning rod not only for the hatred of difference, of the abnormal, but also for the more general loathing for sex,” Michael Warner adds. Thus, only a certain, perhaps even contradictory type of “diversity” may be encouraged

in a post-gay world: a narrow range of expression, displayed within the already-narrow parameters of “normal,” one that is palatable to heterosexuals and that feeds back to the goal of assimilation.

Furthermore, post-gay ideology effaces differences within LGBT communities in favor of sameness. Here it is instructive to remember the words of Audre Lorde: “When we look at our differences and not allow ourselves to be divided, when we own them and are not divided by them, that is when we will be able to move on.” Post-gay rhetoric offers a cognitive short-cut that skirts the difficult work of negotiating dissent without dissolving differences.

### The Assimilation Critique

Assimilation can come with a false promise of inclusion in public life through rights-based forms of tolerance that allow gays access to some social institutions. But tolerance itself is merely managed inequality, Eric C. Clarke notes, and it is therefore not surprising that many gay rights grant access only to the most conservative and normalizing institutions. Once upon a time, gay politics had a distinctive and defiant edge, and it enforced the right to have sex in public places and in bath houses; it debated the morality of outing; and it used confrontation, theater-as-politics tactics such as ACT UP’s disrupting of Easter service at St. Patrick’s cathedral. At the dawn of the post-gay millennium, however, gay politics focused narrowly on issues such as marriage, the military, and family rights.

To express your gay rights, you have to straighten up. The choice to get married, to have kids, and to live in the suburbs, for example, relies on a rejection of urban gay enclaves. Those who select residence in a gayborhood are defined as separatist. A 2004 *New York Times* story interviewed a lesbian couple that had relocated to a New Jersey suburb. Neither woman considered herself “any sort of activist,” and both wanted “a suburban family life that is almost boringly normal.” But why not relocate to a place like Asbury Park that has a visible concentration of lesbian and gay residents? “We’re specifically not moving into gay (cont.)



(.cont)

neighborhoods here. Within the state of New Jersey, we feel comfortable living anywhere,” said one woman. Her partner added, “Here, we’re just part of a neighborhood. We weren’t the gay girls next door; we were just neighbors. We were able to blend in, which is what you want to do, rather than have the scarlet letter on our heads.” Post-gay ideology compels dissolution of distinctions between gay and straight. “There is a portion of our community that wants to be separatist, to have a queer culture, but most of us want to be treated like everyone is,” Dick Dadey, executive director of Empire State Pride Agenda told the *Times* in 1994. “We want to be the neighbors next door, not the lesbian or gay couple next door.” Thus, joining a tolerant public narrows, rather than expands, choices for how to be and live as gay.

### An American Cultural Obsession

The post-gay paradigm is part of a larger American cultural obsession with the prefix post-. In a 2003 *Los Angeles Times* story titled, “In ‘Post’ Culture, the Prefix Is In,” journalist Mary McNamara observed:

“Enter the brave new post-everything world in which we mark our rejection of past cultural movements, and our refusal to commit to new ones, with one little word: ‘post.’ In the past few years, Americans have been told that society is becoming post-black, post-ethnic, post-ironic, post-feminist, and post-political.”

But here we must conclude with a word of caution about the tension between rhetoric and reality. As McNamara smartly adds,

“The success of the ‘Queer Eye for the Straight Guy’ may make society seem very post-gay, but as the recent split in the Episcopal Church over the appointment of its first openly gay bishop proves, all is not what it seems.”

Post-gay (and post-race and post-feminist) does not mean post-discrimination. We must keep up the good fight.

**Amin Ghaziani** is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of British Columbia. He is author of “Post-Gay Collective Identity Construction” (*Social Problems* vol. 58, no. 1), on which this essay is based. Learn more about Ghaziani’s work at [www.aminghaziani.net](http://www.aminghaziani.net)

**Matt Brim** is Assistant Professor of Queer Studies at the College of Staten Island, CUNY. You can learn about Brim at [www.csi.cuny.edu/faculty/BRIM\\_MATTHEW.html](http://www.csi.cuny.edu/faculty/BRIM_MATTHEW.html)

## Editor’s Note:



I am excited to serve as this year’s editor for the SSSP SBPC Newsletter. While the next call for submissions will not be until winter 2012, I am always looking for interesting, current, noteworthy, and thought-provoking materials for the next issue. With that said, I welcome any and all relevant information and/or suggestions for innovative sections that can help foster continued growth and enthusiasm within this Division of SSSP. Responses to the feature article are also welcome. So please feel welcome to contact me at any time. Best, Karen Macke  
Email: [kemacke@maxwell.syr.edu](mailto:kemacke@maxwell.syr.edu)