

Abigail Ocobock

Gender Studies Research Workshop Info

Title:

Less Need or More Greed?: The Impact of Legal Marriage on LGBQ Community Life

Abstract

Most family scholarship stresses the unique benefits people gain from marriage but does not consider community outcomes. That which does emphasize the “greedy” nature of marriage and shows how it reduces community ties, but is limited to research with heterosexuals. The sparse research on same-sex marriage stresses the benefits of increased social integration into mainstream communities, but has not examined if and how this reduces the need for LGBQ communities. Drawing on interview and survey research with 116 LGBQ individuals, this study offers some of the first data to examine the impact of marriage on LGBQ community life. I find little support for a greedy marriage effect and argue that differing life course and relationship trajectories make same-sex marriages less greedy than different-sex ones. Rather than marital status, marital access is a major determinant of community change. I argue that the transition from exclusion to inclusion in the institution of marriage is more important than an individual’s transition from an unmarried to married status. Need proves more important than greed for understanding changes to LGBQ community life. The findings challenge uniformly negative views of marriage’s impact on community in family research, and unvaryingly positive views of its social impact in LGBQ research. Taken together, findings highlight the need to distinguish between marital status and access and types of marriage in evaluating its community impact.

Bio

Dr. Abigail Ocobock obtained her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Chicago in 2015, where she was a Center for the Study of Gender and Sexualities Studies Dissertation Fellow. Her research combines gender and sexualities studies with family and institutional sociology. Her current book project focuses on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) individuals who gained access to legal marriage. Drawing on mixed methods research with 116 participants, it examines the institutional mechanisms through which marriage impacts couple, family, and social relationships. Her work has been published in *The Journal of Marriage and Family* and *Current Sociology*. Her research was supported by a National Science Foundation grant, and won American Sociological Association Sexualities and Family Sections Paper Awards.