January 27, 2020

Committee on the Status of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Political Science
Contact: GSMstatus@mpsanet.org

We write this open letter as Chairs of the MPSA’s new Committee on the Status of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Political Science. We aim to invite those political scientists committed to improving the fairness and inclusivity of the MPSA, and our discipline more broadly, to work with us on this mission. Neither of us would have agreed to Chair this committee if we thought it was just window-dressing, and we are committed to using our time on the committee to catalyze change. But we need the help of the broader discipline to make a difference. In this letter, we outline our first steps and invite your input in shaping our future work.

Why did the MPSA Council form the committee on the status of gender and sexual minorities?

Let us first give you some background on our new committee. While it might be understandable to view the establishment of this committee as a mere symbolic response to the events of the past two years, we have been assured that the MPSA Council is committed to change. Indeed, as we understand it, the immediate catalyst for the formation of this committee was the deep dissatisfaction (and anger) among many MPSA members about the Council’s handling of the allegations of sexual harassment made against William Jacoby, which precipitated his dismissal as editor of AJPS. The current President, Sarah Binder, has assured us that there is a very strongly held view across Council members that the MPSA has serious work to do in response – both to learn from that experience and to improve the climate and inclusivity of MPSA. We are willing to work with the Council to chart a course of action to advance the MPSA’s commitments in this area, and to foster a stronger sense of belonging for women, LGBTQ folks, and people of color within MPSA as well as to promote policy reforms that center fairness and equity. We are told that Council members felt strongly that the status committee would be valuable and essential in this regard. A letter President Binder has already written to MPSA members can be found here. The full report from the MPSA Task Force on “Findings and Recommendations Regarding Complaint of Misconduct” can be found here. Both the summary letter and the full report provide a broader update on other steps taken by the Council to strengthen MPSA.

What is the Committee’s mission?

As we understand it, our Committee should serve as a conduit by which the membership may advance ideas and concerns to the MPSA Council and Leadership, and it is also charged with developing proposals and initiatives to improve MPSA. Thus, the committee’s responsibilities encompass research, professional development, communication, and public outreach. The committee will prepare reports for the MPSA Council on its findings and help advance research on these topics, and it is charged with collaborating with the Committee on the Status of Racial and Ethnic Minorities in Political Science, as well as with the relevant caucus groups or groups from other political science associations. Details on the Status Committees are provided here.
Issues and Actions

At our first meeting, our committee resolved to seek broad input from our colleagues, and to raise some issues with MPSA that seemed critical to us. These issues include:

- Sexual harassment policies
- Childcare access and policies
- Implementation of all-gender policies—for example, a gender audit would likely lead to an all-gender bathroom policy among other policy changes
- Better communication about the infrastructure for breastfeeding
- Considerations regarding LGBTQ+ colleagues and cis women safety
- General efforts to identify best practices to improve the status of women and our LGBTQ+ colleagues in the MPSA.

We aim to collect data on best practices of other professional organizations including information on how these were developed and why, and to recommend to MPSA to implement best practices.

To this end, we invite the input of our colleagues on these and other issues at a series of talks and open fora we have scheduled for this year’s MPSA (please see the end of this letter for details).

In the meantime, here is a bit more information on each of the issues listed above.

Sexual Harassment

The MPSA must ensure that our annual meetings are professional, safe, and inclusive for all members. It is the responsibility of MPSA to create and maintain an environment that is free from sexual harassment. The Status Committee is committed to working with colleagues in political science and in other disciplines to generate ideas and best practices. We plan to work with our colleagues in political science and other disciplines to generate ideas. We will hold an open discussion to which we have invited our colleagues from the #MeTooPoliSci project to speak at this year’s MPSA. We hope you will join us.

Childcare

Our committee considers the current MPSA childcare policy to be inadequate, and we call for an explanation for why the MPSA cannot provide childcare in the same way as peer political science programs. Our committee is concerned that the current childcare policy is a barrier to attendance for many parents in the discipline.

The current childcare policy – updated last year as far as we know – involves providing scholarships to attendees (who must apply for them) for in-room, 1-1 care. More detail is available [here](#).

The MPSA seems to feel that providing centralized childcare is too expensive. It points to the small number of children (in 2019, three children) whose parents availed themselves of this care.
as a potential indicator of demand. Yet, demand for childcare at other conferences (APSA, ISA, etc.) where centralized care is offered has been higher, suggesting that the form matters and that current childcare provision at MPSA is substandard for the discipline. All associations must deal with the costs of providing care, and it appears other associations have made this a priority. We suggest Council adopt a childcare policy that serves its members’ needs appropriately. And, the evidence suggests that such policy is on-site childcare at the conference, available to those who apply and pay for the time their child(ren) spend(s) in care. We have appended here information on peer organization’s childcare provisions. Please contact us if you have further input or suggestions on this issue.

**Gender Audit**

Our committee also felt that a comprehensive gender audit of the MPSA would help to identify areas for needed change. We contacted Heath Fogg-Davis, Professor of Political Science at Temple University and an expert on promoting gender-inclusive organizations, who explained that such an audit would include a comprehensive review of all of the MPSA’s administrative policies and initiatives and making recommendations to either maintain, revise or eliminate specific gendered references. We would hope that MPSA would aim to meet and exceed the standard for gender inclusive and innovative policies to ensure the vibrancy of its membership and community. This could include changing the ways it does surveys, membership forms, bathrooms, awards, sections, affinity groups, diversity initiatives, journals, membership and many other things.

The Association needs better information on the gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation of its membership to better serve its LGBTQ+ and cis women and men members. We plan to call on MPSA to develop a better reporting mechanism for addressing these details.

**Restrooms**

Related to the gender audit above, it was our committee’s sense that more all-gender restrooms are needed. We know that MPSA currently provides one of these. Our sense is that this is inadequate, but a gender audit could help determine an appropriate number of all-gender restrooms.

**MPSA 2020 Events**

We invite all concerned parties to write to our committee at GSMstatus@mpsanet.org. We also hope that you will attend one of the two open forums that will center equity and inclusion scheduled for this year’s MPSA conference. One will be a discussion of best practices that might be employed to address ongoing concerns about sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination. Another will be a discussion of ongoing concerns on addressing concerns of and promoting inclusion for LGBTQ+ identified political scientists. More details on these sessions will be provided on the conference schedule. Finally, we plan to host private office hours at MPSA for those who wish to share their concerns in a less public environment. We hope that these different opportunities will provide members with space to speak frankly about concerns.
and ideas for change. We aim to provide recommendations based, in part, on what we learn from these sessions to Council after this year’s meeting.

Thank you for your patience, and we hope you will join us in Chicago to start a process of disciplinary transformation.

Very best,
S. Laurel Weldon
Stephen M. Engel
Co-chairs

**Committee on the Status of Gender and Sexual Minorities in Political Science**

- Amy Atchison, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Relations, Valparaiso University
- Justin de Benedictis-Kessner, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Boston University
- Stephen M. Engel, Professor of Politics, Bates College
- Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Assistant Professor of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University
- Mona Lena Krook, Associate Professor of Political Science, Rutgers University
- Lanethea Mathews-Schultz, Professor of Political Science, Muhlenberg College
- Erin Mayo-Adam, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Hunter College, CUNY
- Corinne McConnaughey, Associate Professor of Political Science, The George Washington University
- S. Laurel Weldon, Distinguished SFU Professor of Politics, Simon Fraser University
Appendix: Childcare Offered by other Associations (APSA, ISA, ASA):

From the APSA Website:

“APSA is pleased to offer subsidized child care at the 2019 Annual Meeting. ACCENT on Children’s Arrangements will be the returning childcare provider in Washington, DC. They welcome children aged 6 months – 12 years. Children will participate in age-appropriate activities, such as arts and crafts projects, active games and much more in a safe, nurturing environment.

Thanks to a sponsorship by Cambridge University Press, we are pleased to provide child care rebates of up to $150 per child on a space available basis. We hope that this generous sponsorship, combined with APSA’s program subsidy, will help keep your child care costs affordable at this year’s Annual Meeting! Rebates will be provided post-conference. Thanks again to Cambridge University Press!

$10/hour (4 consecutive hour minimum) (6-36 months)  
$8/hour (4 consecutive hour minimum) (3-12 years)

From the ISA Website:

“ISA is pleased to continue our partnership with Kiddie Corp at the 2018 Annual Convention in San Francisco, CA. Program services are available only to ISA members on a first-come, first-served basis. Non-members who wish to participate in the child care program must first join ISA before submitting a registration request to Kiddie Corp. Enrollment for the program opens on this website on Sunday, October 1, 2017.

Eligibility

- ISA members with pre-registered children
- ISA membership must be current through April 7, 2018 BEFORE you submit application to Kiddie Corp
- Children from 6 months to 12 years of age
- Walk-ins are accepted on a space-available basis if enrollment is not met

Rates

- Faculty members pay $50 per child, per day
- Student members pay $25 per child, per day
- Entire program fee applies - no discounts for partial or single-day enrollment

Location and Hours

- Hilton Union Square Vista Lounge, 45th Floor
- Wednesday, April 4 through Saturday, April 7, 2018
- 7:45 AM to 6:15 PM daily”

From the ASA Website

“KiddieCorp will offer a full child care program for children between the ages of 6 months to 12 years for the following days and times:

- Saturday, August 11 from 8:00 am to 6:30 pm
The Child Care Service will be located in the Pennsylvania Convention Center (PCC). Families wishing to enroll their children in the childcare program must preregister for the Annual Meeting and submit payment for the services in full by July 13, 2018. The fees for the childcare program are $55 USD per child, per day or $35 USD per child, per half day (defined as five hours or less). After preregistration and payment is received, you will be contacted to submit your child's information and expected schedule. Payment for childcare services is refundable prior to July 13, 2018 if your schedule changes. Childcare payment is not refundable after July 13. You may add childcare services when you register for the Annual Meeting or add to an existing registration. Sign in to the ASA Portal to continue to registration.

Care Grants
Financial assistance is available to offset the cost of using the Child Care Service for children of unemployed, low-income (as defined by membership category) or student members. To apply for a grant, please submit a letter identifying your membership status via email to ASA Meeting Services. The deadline to apply for a grant is July 13, 2018. The available grant pool will be split among qualified applicants. Successful applicants will be notified the following week.”

Other family friendly things from APSA
“Infant Changing Rooms:
• Marriott – Lobby Bar, Thurgood Marshall Restrooms, Delaware Restrooms (available in both men and women’s)
• Omni Women’s Restroom on the East Side has a dressing room that is used for infant changing. The Presidential meeting room is also available to everyone
• Hilton 1st floor restrooms (both men’s and women’s). Most all restrooms have a counter with changing space

APSA Events:
Family Ice Cream Social on the Marriott East Lawn on Saturday at 1:30 p.m.
• Take a Paws: Puppy Social in the Exhibit Hall on Friday at 1:30 p.m.

Other Resources:
• Family Friendly Hotel Amenities
• Destination DC’s Kid-Friendly DC Attractions”