



# CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF LAW AND SOCIETY BERKELEY LAW

## **CSLS SPEAKER SERIES**

**Cosponsored with the Center for Ethnographic Research**

**Monday, November 20, 2017**

## **LAUREN RIVERA**

Associate Professor, Kellogg School of Management and  
Department of Sociology, Northwestern University

### **“When Two Bodies Are (Not) a Problem: Gender and Relationship Status Discrimination in Academic Hiring”**

Although junior faculty search committees serve as gatekeepers to the professoriate and play vital roles in shaping the demographic composition of academic departments and disciplines, how committees select new hires has received minimal scholarly attention. In this paper, I highlight one mechanism of gender inequalities in academic hiring: relationship status discrimination. Through a qualitative case study of junior faculty search committees at a large, private R1 university, I show that committees actively considered women’s—but not men’s—relationship status when selecting hires. Drawing from gendered scripts of career and family that present men’s careers as taking precedence over women’s, committee members assumed that heterosexual women whose partners held academic or high-status jobs were not “movable,” and excluded such women from offers when there were viable male or single female alternatives. Conversely, committees infrequently discussed male applicants’ relationship status and saw all female partners as movable. Consequently, I show that the “two-body problem” is a gendered phenomenon embedded in cultural stereotypes and organizational practices that can disadvantage women in academic hiring. Moreover, I draw from interviews conducted with administrators and search committee members at this university as well as at a second public R1 university to illuminate general features of academic labor markets that encourage relationship status discrimination. I conclude by discussing the implications of my findings for sociological research on labor market inequalities and faculty diversity.

Professor Rivera’s paper is available in hard copy at the Center and by email request.

**PLACE** Selznick Seminar Room, 2240 Piedmont Avenue  
**TIME** **12:45 – 2:00pm.** Coffee and water provided. Bag lunches welcome.  
**INFO** <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/centers/center-for-the-study-of-law-society/>  
**EMAIL** [csls@law.berkeley.edu](mailto:csls@law.berkeley.edu)

**Jonathan Simon, FACULTY DIRECTOR | Rosann Greenspan, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**