



## Question of the Month: Gender Inequality in the Reproductive Marketplace?

A study in the June issue of the *American Sociological Review* examines gender disparities in the ways in which sperm and egg donors are valued and compensated in the reproductive marketplace. Sociologist Rene Almeling conducted this study and determined that compensation of donors within the industry defies logic as well as basic laws of supply and demand.

“Men donors are paid less for a much longer time commitment and a great deal of personal inconvenience,” she said. “They also are much less prepared for the emotional consequences of serving as a donor of reproductive material.

Women, meanwhile, are not only paid more for a much shorter time commitment, they are repeatedly thanked for ‘giving the gift of life.’

“From compensation rates to the smallest details of donor relations, sperm donors are less valued than egg donors,” Almeling said. “Egg donors are treated like gold, while sperm donors are perceived as a dime a dozen.”

The inequities persist despite the fact that profiles of hundreds of potential egg donors languish on agency Web sites, far outstripping recipient demand, while suitable sperm donors are quite rare, Almeling found. In fact, only a tiny fraction of the male population possesses a sperm count consistently high enough to be considered donation-worthy,

and more than 90 percent of sperm bank applicants are rejected for this and other reasons. As a result, sperm banks routinely resort to finder’s fees to meet the need.

“A pronounced double-standard exists in the way that men and women donors are valued by the fertility industry, and it can’t be explained medically or by market forces,” Almeling said. “Based on the availability of donors alone, you would expect the abundance of potential egg donors to drive down compensation fees and the scarcity of potential sperm donors to drive up their fees. But I found just the opposite.

Almeling’s findings are part of a growing body of research on the sociology of markets in life-saving and life-giving material, including blood and organ donations and life insurance payouts. But Almeling’s study, which is based on interviews with 25 staff members at two sperm banks and two egg agencies, is believed to be the first detailed comparison of gender-based differences in U.S. compensation rates for reproductive material. Almeling has been gathering data on the medical market in genetic material for the past five years.

Almeling found that it is not unusual for egg donors in large cities to make upwards of \$5,000 per donation — no matter the outcome. Agencies also encourage recipient couples to provide female donors with thank-you notes, small tokens

of appreciation and even cash bonuses.

In contrast, sperm banks do not pay as well or encourage such displays of gratitude. Male donors make between \$50 and \$75 per donation, and they are paid only when their samples meet the high fertility standards required for freezing. Over the length of their contracts — generally, an entire year — sperm donors may make as much as their female counterparts do over the course of a single six-week cycle, but only if they donate more than the required one sample per week. Invariably, however, earnings of sperm donors fell short, either because donors missed weekly sessions or their samples failed to meet fertility standards. Women also may donate as many as three times in a year, and their fees increase with each completed cycle.

So an egg donor actually stands to make far more during the same period of time than even the most diligent and fertile sperm donor.’ (ASA NEWS, May 23, 2007. Retrieved 9/22/07 from [www.asanet.org/cs/press/view\\_news?pressrelease.id=85](http://www.asanet.org/cs/press/view_news?pressrelease.id=85))

Read the full article in the June issue of the *American Sociological Review* or read a longer excerpt on the ASA media site at [www.asanet.org/cs/press/view\\_news?pressrelease.id=85](http://www.asanet.org/cs/press/view_news?pressrelease.id=85)

### Upcoming Events

Box-a-Thon sponsored by Habital for Humanity Contact Hayley McPhail <a href="mailto:mchabitat@meredith.edu">mchabitat@meredith.edu</a>	Oct. 4
Fall Break	Oct. 11-14
BCBS Presidential Lecture Series: Michael Beschloss 7pm Jones Auditorium	Oct. 18
Campus Dialogue on Diversity: Invisible Disabilities 6pm Ledford 101	Oct. 25

### Quote of the Month:

“History is, strictly speaking, the study of questions; the study of answers belongs to anthropology and sociology.”

—W.H. Auden

# New Face in Sociology: Dr. Maria Febbo-Hunt

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When I was asked by Dr. Cokely to write a short piece for this newsletter introducing myself to the students in the Department of Sociology and Social Work, I had to think a lot about what to include. It's a bit of a daunting task to write about one's self. I decided to tell you the story of how I came to be a Sociologist/Criminologist and found myself in the company of Angels...once again.

Once upon a time, I was an eighteen year old Sociology major at Tennessee Technological University in Cookeville, Tennessee. I had discovered I liked Sociology while taking a course in high school. My teacher invited a guest speaker who was a Criminologist to talk to the class and I was riveted. It was at this small state university, bigger than Meredith but no where near the size of NC State, that I realized I wanted to be a college professor. I loved my classes, the people who worked in the department (they were like my family away from my family), and my major. I thrived in this environment and I believe it was there that I decided I wanted to be part of a department at a small teaching college or university.

While I was attending Tech, I met a boy. Long story short, we got married, moved to Texas (his job was in Dallas) and I left the security of the Sociology, Anthropology & Philosophy Department at Tech. When I got to Texas, I thought I'd be completing my undergraduate degree at a large state university. Fate stepped in (well, it was really a Physics requirement) and I found my way to the University of Texas at Dallas, a small university for juniors, seniors,

and graduate students (they took all my science transfer credits). Once again, I found myself in a nurturing, yet different, environment. It didn't feel like Tech, but the faculty were supportive and I settled right in and finished my bachelor's there. One Criminology professor became a mentor to me and, with his guidance, I began applying to graduate programs. I was accepted at NC State, so we moved to "Mayberry" (I'm a big Andy Griffith fan)!

While at State, I held teaching assistantships. Not only did the assistantship pay some of the bills, it allowed me to hone my teaching. I loved teaching more than I ever thought I would. While I was working on my Ph.D., I had the opportunity to teach one semester at Meredith. I thoroughly enjoyed working in an environment much like the department at Tennessee Tech. It felt like Meredith fit, like the place I had been searching for as a place to call my professional home. Unfortunately, it lasted only one semester. By this time, we knew we wanted to stay in Raleigh, so going on the academic job market and moving away was really off the table.

Needing to earn a living and not having a steady teaching gig, I accepted my first applied job with the North Carolina Department of Correction. It was a part-time job that would help pay the bills while I finished up my doctorate. Well, the dissertation was not getting done, so I took some time off to work on it. I finished my Ph.D. in May of 2003 and with no substantial teaching opportunities available, I returned to applied research and took a job working

for the Wake County Public School System. While this work had its own interest and reward, I longed to be back in the classroom. I spent most of my time in graduate school, and really most of my adult life, visualizing my career as a teacher. I checked on a regular basis to see if there was a position in the area, especially at Meredith, but alas, there was not. One day, I was going through the usual process of checking the local colleges and universities for a position when I noticed a position at Saint Augustine's College, so back to school I went!

I worked for two years as an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice. It was the best and the worst job I have ever had. The small, private school had some of the same qualities of my department at Tennessee Tech, all those years ago, and the students certainly were the best part of those two years! There were other factors that made it the worst, so I began exploring my options. Then last March, I saw it! A job posting for an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology & Social Work at MEREDITH! Even better, it was a position for a Criminologist, one of my long-time interests and ultimately one of my areas of concentration while at State. I applied and that's how I found myself back in Angel territory! I must say, that Meredith still seems to fit and I couldn't be happier to be here. I look forward to getting to know your stories. Stop by and chat sometime!

## Spring Courses

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The sociology faculty members have been busy planning for the spring semester. In addition to courses required for the major and minor we will also be offering several interesting elective courses this coming spring.

Among the elective courses on the list are SOC 337: Corrections, SOC 340: Aging & Retirement, SOC 420: Gender & Society and SOC 441: Readings in Juvenile Delinquency. Stay tuned in the coming weeks for the complete course schedule and details regarding the days and times of all our course offerings.



## Sociology Club

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Several students in the department are interested in reactivating the Sociology Club. If you are interested in joining with others to conduct service projects, to plan and participate in events related to sociological issues, or to gather with others with similar interests sociology club may be the right place for you!

For more information contact Dr. Lori Brown [brownl0@meredith.edu](mailto:brownl0@meredith.edu) or stop by her office Ledford 310.