

HST 203: U.S. History Sp18 (Escobar Meta 41002 43590)

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Forum 1 Censorship & Morality

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Censorship & Morality

by [Joe Escobar](#) - Thursday, April 12, 2018, 9:05 AM

This thread is for discussions on the Censorship & Morality topic.

To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT - SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which one of the questions you are addressing. Do NOT simply leave it RE: Censorship & Morality

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The Issues of Sappho with Morality, Women, and Virtue



by [Carley Kramer](#) - Saturday, April 14, 2018, 12:01 PM

The aspect of the Sapho video clip I found most compelling was what specifically about the play was judged as scandalous at the time, as the morality of the issue seems very out of line with what we would judge as moral today. "The scandalous part of Sapho was that at the end of the piece, Sapho was carried upstairs, clearly to a bedroom, and Sapho did not protest. She went willingly to have an illicit sexual relationship with a man, and she wasn't punished for it." (0:43, Sapho clip) This means that the "guardians of morality" of the era found it immoral that Sapho was consenting to a sexual relationship, and would have found it more moral if the play had ended with Sapho being carried upstairs kicking and screaming. Wow! This is effectively saying that it was more "proper" for a woman to be raped than to be represented as anything other than inherently virtuous or as having any sense of physical or sexual autonomy. To most Americans today, it's difficult to see how this argument is in any way moral.

This issue reflects society's attitude towards woman at the time; that they ought to be demure, helpless creatures of virtue. Even those fighting for woman suffrage in this era based their arguments off of these ideals of women's inherent virtue. "In the Progressive Era, however, many suffragists did not base their argument for enfranchisement on male-female equality. Women, they stressed, were different than men, possessing a moral sense and a nurturing quality that men lacked. Consequently, they could be trusted to vote virtuously and thereby advance the progressive aim of cleansing politics of corruption....In other words, the enfranchisement of women would enhance the quality of both public and private life without obligating anyone to think that members of the female sex were the equals of men in all respects." (Textbook page 697) I personally believe that viewing women in this way is an overly simplistic generalization that dehumanizes women. It was at least somewhat reassuring to see that the public did not agree with the so-called "guardians of morality," that Olga Nethersole was released, and that "the censors who had gotten it closed succeeded only in expanding the audience far beyond what it would've been without the arrest." (2:58 Sapho clip)

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Re: The Issues of Sapho with Morality, Women, and Virtue

by [Kayla von Stein](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:41 PM

The bit about the "guardians of morality" finding it more moral if the play had ended with Sapho being carried upstairs kicking and screaming and that they would think it more proper if the women were raped, is a bit of stretch. I don't think they are saying that a man forcibly taking a woman into a room and raping her is good as much as they are saying that women actively seeking and enjoying sex is bad.

I think that that is an important distinction. I'm more than certain that the "guardians of morality" would be completely mortified at the idea of a man taking advantage of a woman (if the woman fit their description of innocence, that is).

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Re: The Issues of Sapho with Morality, Women, and Virtue

by [Vanessa Heilmann](#) - Wednesday, April 18, 2018, 6:01 PM

I agree that it is an outrage how in the Sapho scandal, Olga was being arrested for going up stairs "willingly to have an illicit sexual relationship with a man, and she wasn't punished for it." (Sapho Video clip) However, I disagree that the "guardians of morality" were saying that she should be "kicking and screaming" (The Issues of Sapho with Morality, Women, and Virtue, Carly Kramer) and that "it was more "proper" for a woman to be raped than to be represented as anything other than inherently virtuous or as having any sense of physical or sexual autonomy. (The Issues of Sapho with Morality, Women, and Virtue, Carly Kramer) I believe it was more based on the fact that this woman was showing the public that women can feel pleasure and enjoyment in sex as well, and that was foreign to the eye of the public at that time. It was taboo to talk about sexual relations and here Olga was "a seductive woman with any number of lovers". (Sapho Video Clip 1:15) To show woman that is okay could challenge the norm and change a lot for women in those days. It in essence is giving them a sort of "freedom" which was minimal in those times.

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Re: Censorship & Morality

by [Wyatt Van Loon](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 4:02 PM

: The turn of the century was a very prosperous time for media. Travel had increased, magazines and newspapers grew and even the development of the motion picture came into light. With all these, some of them new, ways to spread ideas and opinions amongst the society it certainly makes sense that we would see an increase in attempts of censorship as the spread of opinions becomes easier in daily life. Not everybody's ideas were going to agree with the common moral beliefs of the press, media and government. So, we saw censorship to try and block all the "wrong ideas" perhaps to be sure that only the correct political agenda is pushed. An example of censorship being used at the turn of the century is as you all have hopefully read and

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Re: Censorship & Morality

by [Kayla von Stein](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 12:43 AM

I think the issue we run into today with the censorship of our news is how news is filtered to us in this day and age. In the 19th and 20 century, the way our news was given to us was word of mouth or by a couple of different newspaper sources. Now we are dealing with technology personalizing what we see in the news based on our interests and what we buy and where we live and a whole MAGNITUDE of other things. We are now choosing what our news say to us inadvertently just by a couple clicks of the mouse or keyboard. The same article can even have an entirely different title and introduction to paint the words in a different light on a certain subject. It is censorship on a grand scale. But there is a way around it if you choose to stay informed.

I don't have an answer as to why you may not have seen the Maryland High School situation that you speak of, I know that I heard about it before reading this and we both live in the same place and I know that I didn't get it from Fox News. In fact, I do know that it was reported on CNN (cnn.com/2018/03/20) and ABC (abcnews.go.com/2018/03/27), but I digress. At this point, our news is what we are wanting out of it. If you feel like guns are the most important issue at this point, then that is the type of news you will be surrounded with because it intrigues you and advertisers love when you're intrigued. So they'll keep spoon feeding the same information essentially unless you take said spoon and go to a different bowl. 

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Question 2

by [Wyatt Van Loon](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 5:04 PM

My personal opinion is that the Mann Act was completely needed back then. I don't like the lack of value prostitution suggest upon our women and to me the thought of a women selling herself is just appalling and the idea that women would be forced against their will to be a prostitute is to me even worse. Women are by no means a good or service to be used and disposed of when done with. They are the other half needed for family in my view. Now the Mann act didn't define prostitution illegal so much as it would have made it harder to transport women needed for it, but nevertheless it makes a business in prostitution a little harder to operate and hopefully

made it harder to transport kidnapped females so I think the Mann act was completely necessary then and now and shall be as long prostitution and kidnapping girls for prostitution is a problem. As far what can happen when Government interferes with its citizen's behavior? I think that is not hard to figure out. I would say on the extreme end is if the government in power tries to hard to control its citizens a revolution can occur or at the very least some riots and retaliation. When lawmakers pass legislation attempting to help a certain group of people they can often screw up creating laws that were not completely right for that group of people or it was right for that particular group, but it could actually harm another different group that is still subject to that law.

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Re: Question 2

by [Kayla von Stein](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:59 PM

In the audio clip about the Mann Act, it is mentioned that the law was mostly likely put into play because of rumors being taken as truth (around the 0:43 mark in the NPR clip) that women were being forced into prostitution and moved all of the country by a secret network of immigrants. Eric Weiner, the main narrator, mentions at the beginning that it didn't start until women were becoming a larger part of the workplace because of the advance of technology (such as the typewriter).

With these pieces of information, do you think the law itself was really about prostitution as much as it was about trying to make sure that woman were reigned in? The Mann Act was not just prostitution, but also a very vague "debauchery and any other moral purpose," which leads me to believe that there was more to it than wanting to protect women.

I do think that in terms of actual kidnapping and forceful prostitution the law is sound, but history seems to reflect that it wasn't the main cause for this law to be enacted.

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Re: Question 2

by [Vanessa Heilmann](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 11:11 PM

I'm very interested with your idea that the original goal of the Mann Act had some other intentions behind it. It wouldn't surprise me since the government usually has a few agendas in mind when putting laws in place. I think Jack Johnson was an example of a hidden agenda and "many others believed his case was racially motivated" as well. (NPR clip) Lucille Cameron was "soon to become his second

wife and she herself “refused to cooperate and the case fell apart.” (Wikipedia, Jack Johnson, Prison Sentence) I definitely think there was more behind his arrest and finally in June 2016, the United States Commission on Civil Rights voted and passed a pardon to “right this century-old wrong.” (Wikipedia, Jack Johnson, Prison Sentence)

I do however feel that the Mann Act is a law in which should absolutely be in place. This is still a highly prevalent wrong in our world, and it’s not just women and children. According to The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, “51% of identified victims of trafficking are women, 28% children and 21% men.” (Antislavery.org) There are numerous foundations that are still fighting, healing and restoring victims who have dealt with this sexual, physical and physiological abuse. RockPaperScissors is one organization that I have a very close friend work with, and these are very real and serious cases. I understand that laws are not much if they aren’t being implemented, and people will always still break the law to essentially meet their own needs, but those laws should still be in place. If this written law has even stopped just one woman, child or man from being transported “across state lines “for the purpose of prostitution or debauchery, or for any other immoral purpose,” then that is a victory to me.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Question 2

by [Nestor Aviles Perez](#) - Friday, April 20, 2018, 11:20 PM

I disagree with you on the Mann Act being necessary back then. Did you read other articles about why the Mann Act was passed? I read a PBS article that during the turn of the century Muckrakers were blowing the issue of prostitution out of proportion. I read another History Channel article that said Congress passed the Mann Act because they thought that no woman would willingly go into prostitution. We know that this cannot be completely true. Some women voluntarily became prostitutes just to make ends meet. Not all prostitutes were part of the white slave trade that were taken by immigrant men and forced into prostitution. The situation was just over exaggerated. However, I do agree with you that it necessary today because I believe that it helps prevent child prostitution.

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Mann Act



Mann Act

by [Decker Robinson](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 8:10 PM

The law was necessary back then because our society during the progressive movement needed something to combat forced prostitution. The Mann Act is still necessary today because sex trafficking is still very much prevalent. I think it's important to note that congress amended the law in 1968 to "Any sexual activity for which any person can be charged for a federal offense" (2:08 into NPR audio report). The amendment to the Mann Act was important because obviously times have changed from the Progressive movement. When a government attempts to regulate the behavior of its citizens, people sometimes will attempt to undermine the government regulation and do it anyways as their way of protest. Unfortunately the unintended consequences of legislation attempting to help a specific group of people can include the unfair treatment and targeting of another group of people such as Jack Johnson with the Mann Act.

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Sopha, Olga Nethersole, and the Persecution of Female Sexuality (A Comparison Between 1900 and Today)

by [Kayla von Stein](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 9:45 PM

What I found most compelling or interesting about the state of censorship in the US in 1900 and Sapho was that even though the content itself wouldn't be racy to today's standards, the actions that took place to the people involved (specifically Olga Nethersole) are not too far off from what would happen today.

Specifically, the ostracization and punishment of women in general displaying anything that shows they are also sexual beings. In the case of Olga Nethersole, the mere indication of being taken into a room by a man where they were presumed to have sex was completely scandalous. The leading man of the play also had to stand trial, but there was nowhere near the retribution that Olga Nethersole endured in the midst of the charges and the trial.

I can find connections in a multitude of places where we do very similar things today. A good example is in 2013, Stacie Halas a teacher at a middle school in Oxnard, California was fired because she had previously done pornography. She was deemed unfit to be a teacher and unable to be respected by her colleagues. Her lawyer even states, "Miss Halas is more than just an individual fighting for her job as a teacher I

think she's representative of a lot of people who may have a past that may not involve anything illegal or anything that hurts anybody." (www.cbsnews.com)

Halas never did pornography while employed at the school, but she was fired from her position because she would be seen as an unfit role model for the children teaching. This is a not so pleasant ending versus what happened with Olga, but at the surface it has very common qualities which include: Sexuality in the US, specifically female sexuality, being deemed immoral. Also, the punishment of the women for participating in the act or suggestion of sex.

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Re: Sopha, Olga Nethersole, and the Persecution of Female Sexuality (A Comparison Between 1900 and Today)

by [Nestor Aviles Perez](#) - Friday, April 20, 2018, 11:47 PM

I also agree with you that in our culture female sexuality is looked down upon. When a woman has multiple sexual partners she is looked down upon and is judged. However, when a man has multiple sexual partners he is often commended and celebrated for doing so. It is a strange situation because in the US women are looked down upon for their sexuality but they are also overly sexualized in the media and advertising.

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Morals? What are those?

by [Scott Fails](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:34 PM

Regarding "Sapho", I find it most compelling that Olga Nethersole was arrested herself for her participation in a role that she played in an entertainment setting. The very thought of that is hard to wrap my brain around and really just disappointing when you consider the decisions made by the arresting officials of the time period. I don't see much comparison with this and issues of today in a sense that there's so much public outcry for injustice regardless of the topic or the details surrounding the issues of today and of the opinion one has on a particular subject. There's enough support for any opinion publicly that modern day issues are often times skirted by those in position of authority for fear of the backlash publicly. Whether right or wrong, if an issue doesn't specifically fit into the confined verbiage of law, then it's hard to dictate breaking of

those laws without the frivolous nature of personal opinion. It doesn't make it right or wrong, just simply reality...and again, right or wrong would resort back to personal opinion.

Concerning the Mann act, I do see the validity of the act during the turn of the century as well as modern day. Clearly the issue of women being used and transported across state lines for the use of prostitution was a realistic concern that needed to be addressed to protect those whose liberties were being infringed upon. The same can be said for today's human trafficking problem and that is why the intricate details and verbiage of the Mann act have been manipulated at times to address concerns throughout time as stated in the audio file. This act has stood the test of time as its intention is for the protection of people against the forceful participation in morally questionable and unlawful behavior. This will always be an issue, thus the Mann act will prevail as time progresses. The public outcry of injustice is common when the government steps in and attempts to regulate the behavior of its citizens, but rarely if ever does that take place in issues such as illegal prostitution or those being held against their will and the government stepping in to support and defend those directly effected by the illegal behavior.

Modern day sex scandals of politicians and other public figures in my opinion show that the moral compass of society hasn't changed much since the turn of the century. What has changed and manifested into what seems to be a bigger issue are two things in my opinion. One, exposure. Modern day technology makes the exposure of said socially unacceptable moral behaviors so easy for distribution to the masses in an instantaneous fashion. Scandal is glorified by the media and those outlets releasing the information every second of the day in an attempt to always be the first with the info. Secondly, numbing of and continued lower standards of morals. Our modern day world seems to constantly be in pursuit of the next shock to the morals system that the public becomes desensitized to morally disgusting behavior that happens at a mind blowing frequency. Society is constantly pushing the envelope morally so much so that it encourages the breakdown of what one considers acceptable.

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Re: Morals? What are those?

by [Decker Robinson](#) - Tuesday, April 17, 2018, 8:33 PM

I understand and agree with your point about Sapho being arrested. With that being said, I think taking the time period into consideration is important. In that time period, women already had limited rights and they were expected to be "ladylike". So as wrong it was, law officials deemed that the play was apparently bad enough to arrest her. Like you said it is hard to wrap your head around; but, putting the time period perspective, especially for women, it isn't as mind boggling as you think. Like

you said, today this obviously would not fly and Sapho would probably be able to sue.

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An extreme comparison to Sapho

by [Vanessa Heilmann](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 10:34 PM

The Play Sapho raised the issue of censorship in the 1900's. This concern seems to be new to this era because in that time women didn't have as much freedom and were not looked at as independent they were seen and treated as property. The amount of female promiscuity in these days was very rare since it was culturally unacceptable. Being shown type of behavior in movies such as Sapho or in "peep shows, novels and postcards" was new; the self-acclaimed "guardians of morality" wanted to cease the idea of "women experiencing pleasure in sex" by making Olga Nethersole an example. (Video clip of Sapho and Olga Nethersole)

To me, this idea treats women as property and looks at them as if they don't have a right to sexuality or pleasure. One disgusting, yet extreme comparison in today's world is the fight against FGM (female genital mutilation). "FGM is a destructive operation, during which the female genitals are partly or entirely removed or injured with the aim of inhibiting a woman's sexual feelings." (<http://www.desertflowerfoundation.org/>) FGM currently happens to this day in Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and also seen in immigrants from Europe. "According to estimates by the World Health Organization (WHO) 200 million women are affected by FGM worldwide." There are even some cases reported where families have brought their customs into the United States . According to www.unicefusa.org "a doctor in Michigan [has been charged with performing multiple procedures on girls between six and eight years old](#)".

This is an extreme comparison of women's rights, but in both arenas they are regulating what women can do and feel, denying their freedom of choice. In the Sapho case the warrant issued was under the penal code:

"A public nuisance is a crime against the order and economy of the state and consists in unlawfully doing an act or omitting to perform a duty which act of omission annoys, injures or endangers the comfort, repose, health or safety of any considerable number of persons or offends public decency." (stagebeauty.net)

This states that a woman's a choice to have different partners or indulge in pleasure is offensive and violates public decency. In the 1900's women did not have any of the rights we do in today's society, but in some places today women are still fighting for the freedom of choice, self-expression, and experiencing pleasure. We have come along way since the 1900's but the fight for women's rights has a long way to go to fix devastating injustices and give women an equal right to live and experience life as an equal human being.

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Re: An extreme comparison to Sapho

by [Kayla von Stein](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 11:05 PM

The fight for female sexuality is definitely still a work in progress and is not yet won across the board, especially with your particularly extreme example of FGM. I would say in terms of the United States though, that FGM would be seen as inhumane and immoral. I could potentially see it being tolerated in the time of Sapho and the scandal surrounding though, since female arousal was misunderstood and would probably be seen as largely not a big deal as long as women could still procreate.

Sum of ratings: 0 (1)

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Response to Sapho

by [Alexander Thompson](#) - Sunday, April 15, 2018, 11:28 PM

I think the sapho story shows an interesting divide between what authority and the government wanted the public to think, and what the public actually thought. What I'm getting at is, even though Olga was arrested and charged by authorities, for what they claimed was indecency and a "crime against the norm", it only took 15 minutes for a jury to find Olga not guilty, as the video says.

Another point that might be able to be made is that the government rejected this play in particular partially because of where it came from, since the play was based on a foreign french novel, and not an american one, it didn't follow the "american way" like government wanted during the early 20th century.

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[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Re: Response to Sapho**by [Vanessa Heilmann](#) - Monday, April 16, 2018, 10:50 PM

You make a very interesting point that I hadn't thought of... It does show that what the government wanted and what the people stood for was different. In the end the people spoke (the jury) and she was found not guilty. I also think the fact that "the show was reopened and the sensors that had gotten it closed down succeeded only in expanding the audience far beyond what it would've been without the arrest", shows that even back then people were drawn to scandal and promiscuity. Even after "the guardians of morality" saying that was wrong and violating the law, people wanted to see it even more.

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1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**Part 2: Conservatism**by [Decker Robinson](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 1:28 PM

I agree to a lot of the points made in the article to an extent. I think the point the author made about conservatives resistance to change, such as their resistance to give equal protection/rights for gays and lesbians, held a lot of validity. With that being said, I know plenty of people that consider themselves as conservatives; but, believe gays and lesbians. Obviously it's important to think that this article was published in 2003 and that they don't speak for all conservatives. For the most part, I believe that the article is pretty accurate of the psychological factors that play into conservatism. I consider myself liberal; but, I think the only way I discern if the claims are accurate is just from personal experience and having plenty of conservatives in my life. Although the article addresses only conservatives, I think the article's accuracy should be determined by more than conservatives because I believe they would be in denial of the claims and having other people judge from whatever experience with conservatives can accurately determine if the article is valid.

Sum of ratings:1 (1)

1

[Permalink](#) | [Show parent](#) | [Edit](#) | [Split](#) | [Delete](#) | [Reply](#)**The Mann Act: Yesterday and Today**by [Nestor Aviles Perez](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 3:18 PM

I believe the Mann Act was not necessary then. It was passed to stop the "white slave trade" and it made the transportation of women for immoral purposes illegal (Textbook pg 680). Many white women were flooding to the cities to look for jobs and people

thought immigrants were taking advantage of them and forcing them into a sex trade. However, according to an article published by PBS, the FBI did an investigation on this alleged "white slave trade" and they did not find evidence of a widespread "white slave trade" (PBS article on Mann Act). Also in the same article, it said Muckrakers blew the stories out of proportion and pushed the stories of these women being taken and forced into the sex trade. The bill was only passed to please the public and make them think the government was doing something about the situation.

However, the Mann Act has been revised and it is necessary today. The Mann Act now protects children from being transported across state lines in a sex trade. It is widely known that there is an active child sex trade in the US. This act acts as a protection for those children. This act helped charge Jack Schaap, the pastor at a megachurch, with the transportation of a minor across state lines to have sex with her (Wikipedia entry on the Mann Act). He was transporting a 16-year-old girl that he was supposed to be counseling.

When the government attempts to regulate the behavior of its citizens and try to make it ethical it leads to many problems. People do not want to be told what they can and cannot do, especially by the government. Having the government try to regulate the behavior of its citizens leads to more arrests and incarcerations that are unjust and unnecessary. For example, prohibition was supposed to make the citizens more ethical and help the crime rate but homicides went up 78% during prohibition. This is an example of an unexpected outcome of the government trying to help a group of people. Another outcome of the government trying to regulate its citizens is that the citizens will want to do the thing they aren't supposed to do more than before just because they are not supposed to do it. Minorities are usually the ones that are trying to be helped but they are looked down upon when they don't follow the rule that was passed to supposedly help them. They end up suffering more.

Sum of ratings: 3 (1)

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UC Berkeley doing a piece on conservatives? Ha!

by [Scott Fails](#) - Thursday, April 19, 2018, 5:33 PM

I find it hard to discuss the "finer" points of the article from UC Berkeley as I don't get much value out of it at all. The article seems a bit politically biased and irritating in my opinion. While I do lean towards the conservative side of politics, I am about as objective a person as it comes when discussion of all opinions involved are concerned. That said, the article seems to put conservatives in a defined box under negative connotation and what really seems like finger pointing. I also find the idea of drilling down to "what makes a conservative" in an article by one of the known most liberal of

areas in UC Berkeley to be laughable at best. To be fair, there are some interesting findings in the article, one being "Conservatives don't feel the need to jump through complex, intellectual hoops in order to understand or justify some of their positions, he said. "They are more comfortable seeing and stating things in black and white in ways that would make liberals squirm," Glaser said." While I generally think this statement is kind of a common sense take, perhaps it has conversational necessity? I believe a better article to drill down to the makeup of a political conservative would be a factual piece that removes the comparison of the liberal side of things and specifically focuses on conservatism. When conducted in the format of comparison as this article does, it becomes one of "which opinion is better" and paints one side into a corner while the other side takes the opportunity to pay themselves on the back. Now, I may be missing the point of the article all together? However, it really did come across as an eye rolling read for me. I believe every persons interpretation of the article to be valid and not just for those on the conservative side. That said though, it opens the door for one of those political arguments that don't appeal to me.

In regards to the PMRC censorship issue of the 1980's, I do see remote similarities between it and that of Sapho as discussed in earlier postings. The major difference for me is that the heavy metal rockers weren't arrested or their social contributions. While the rock community was forced to defend their rights to free speech, the way in which it was handled is a far cry from that of the actress in Sapho. These are clearly both signs of conservatism with regard to the "system" making an attempt to shield the public from the "unacceptable" nature of these particular entertainers. Any way you slice it, being open to new or different entertainment and their respective content would be a liberal acceptance.

Sum of ratings: 2 (1)

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