

Queer Studies Benefit Journalism Education and Education in General | Inside Higher Ed

By Steven W. Thrasher

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Steven Thrasher argues that the field of queer studies is vitally necessary for journalism education. He finds that its emphasis on critically analyzing subjectivity and normativity is a critical skill for journalists. Thrasher says that while queer studies' benefits are especially needed for journalists, it is also useful for people in general.

And while everyone needs a critical queer education, journalists — those of us reporting on and trying to make sense of the world for our audiences during times of social upheaval — need a queer studies education the most. Since at least the mid-20th century, queer people have been at the heart of the major social movements and civil rights organizations in the United States, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Poor People's Campaign, Stonewall riots, ACT-UP, Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter. Such campaigns have made life better not just for LGBTQ people. Under its master planner [Bayard Rustin](#), the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom has [deeply influenced every mass capital protest](#) since. While AIDS has affected almost every element of our routine medical lives, the lesbian and gay ACT-UP protesters who fought back forever changed the way Americans interact with medicine and politics. And the Stonewall rioters didn't only pave the way for same-sex marriage, but they also modeled how to protest against police en masse — violently if needed — and ignited reconsiderations of sexuality and gender for people across the spectrum.

[...]

A queer studies education can not only help journalists to question assumed subjectivities and the supposed superiority (and immutability) of certain identity characteristics (like heterosexuality and masculinity) but also to question them. That can lead some queer reporters, such as the Pulitzer and National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association award winner Ronan Farrow, to effectively unpack sexual harassment. Or to understand that the common thread in American mass

shootings isn't being a Muslim, African American or an immigrant, but being a white male — the very demographic that usually goes underreported because of its alleged neutrality.

Queer journalism can also ask different kinds of questions than gay activism might. For instance, some gay activists might say it's a good thing that U.S. police departments and military armed forces employ LGBTQ soldiers (and, as a matter of employment equality, it is) and stop there. But peering beyond "pinkwashing" and what Jasbir Puar has [called](#) homonationalism, queer journalists would also critically ask about and investigate how many queer people are killed by U.S. bombs in other countries and by U.S. police officers domestically.

Queerness doesn't keep us from being objective. It helps us to ask more questions, to dig deeper and look harder — and that can make for better journalism.

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