THE CRIMINALIZATION OF CONSENSUAL ADULT SEX AFTER LAWRENCE

Richard Broughton
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By J. Richard Broughton*

I. INTRODUCTION

American criminal law punishes private consensual sex between adults. Someone unacquainted with American sex crime law, and in the habit of keenly protecting his or her sexual privacy and autonomy, might find that initial observation outrageous. The observation becomes less outrageous, however, when we qualify it by saying that the criminal law punishes some forms of private consensual sex between adults. Still, the observation bears scrutiny, for one might imagine, it must be a difficult proposition indeed – given the nuance and complexity of sexual relationships generally – when the state must select which forms of private consensual sexual conduct between adults it will subject to moral condemnation and punishment. The nuance and complexity of sexual matters notwithstanding, the criminal law has long sought to regulate them, even far beyond the obvious categories of criminalization, such as rape.¹ Criminal law regulates both the manner in which we obtain sex (for example, by force and without consent, or by payment of money) and also with whom we may have sex, or the category of person with whom we may have sex (for example, siblings, students, patients, or persons married to someone else). And this remains true even where the sex is in fact consensual, even

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affirmatively desired, and entirely private between consenting adult parties.\textsuperscript{2} Of course, one axiom guiding such criminalization is that the sexual appetite of human beings – like other human appetites – ought to be controlled and that the state can advance important interests through such controls. Yet in a free society devoted to some substantial measure of legal protection for sexual autonomy, the criminalization of private consensual sex between adults raises serious concerns, both as a matter of sound public policy and of constitutional law.

The constitutional dilemma here is one created chiefly by the Supreme Court’s decision in \textit{Lawrence v. Texas},\textsuperscript{3} which invalidated a Texas statute criminalizing homosexual sodomy. It is an exceedingly rich case but a challenge to interpret and apply. \textit{Lawrence} appears to hold that private, consensual, non-prostitution sex between adults enjoys constitutional protection under the doctrine of substantive due process.\textsuperscript{4} Yet the extent of that protection remains fuzzy. The Court speaks of the right broadly, in terms that make the right appear fundamental, and thus presumably subject to more searching judicial scrutiny: “Liberty presumes an autonomy of self that includes freedom of thought, belief, expression, and certain intimate conduct. The instant case involves liberty of the person both in its spatial and in its more transcendent dimensions;”\textsuperscript{5} “It suffices for us to acknowledge that adults may choose to enter upon this relationship in the confines of their homes and their own private lives and still retain their dignity as free persons;”\textsuperscript{6}

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\item \textsuperscript{2} \textit{See infra}, Parts II and III.
\item \textsuperscript{3} 539 U.S. 558 (2003). The Court’s description of the facts that led to Lawrence’s prosecution pursuant to the Texas homosexual sodomy prohibition, we now know, did not fully capture the story behind the case. Fortunately, Dale Carpenter’s excellent recent book has helped us to better understand the story of \textit{Lawrence}. \textit{See DALE CARPENTER, FLAGRANT CONDUCT: THE STORY OF LAWRENCE V. TEXAS} (2012).
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Lawrence}, 539 U.S. at 578.
\item \textsuperscript{5} \textit{Id.} at 562
\item \textsuperscript{6} \textit{Id.} at 567.
\end{itemize}
“These references [to laws and traditions of the last fifty years] show an emerging awareness that liberty gives substantial protection to adult persons in deciding how to conduct their private lives in matters pertaining to sex.”\(^7\) But the Court ultimately disposes of the case by saying that Texas possessed no legitimate interest (no rational basis) for the law.\(^8\) This has led many courts to find – without more direction from the Court – that the right vindicated in Lawrence was not fundamental and thus legislation implicating such a right is subjected only to rational basis review (note that the academic commentary subjects this conclusion to intense criticism),\(^9\) though presumably the state’s interest must be something other than a mere effort to recognize and enforce good morals among the citizenry.\(^10\) The Court did not apply (indeed, did not mention) the substantive due process approach articulated most fully in Washington v. Glucksberg, which ordinarily requires, on substantive due process claims for rights not yet recognized, a careful description of the asserted right and that the right be vindicated by history and tradition.\(^11\)

\(^7\) Id. at 572.

\(^8\) Id. at 578.


\(^10\) This was the interest advanced by Texas, which the Court found insufficient. Id. at 577-78 (adopting Justice Stevens’ statement dissenting in Bowers v. Hardwick, 478 U.S. 186, 216 (1986), that the state’s view of a sexual practice as immoral “is not a sufficient reason for upholding a law prohibiting the practice.”). For analysis of this aspect of Lawrence, see Keith Burgess-Jackson, Our Millian Constitution: The Supreme Court’s Repudiation of Immorality as a Ground of Criminal Punishment, 18 NOTRE DAME J.L. ETHICS & PUB. POL’y 407 (2004).

\(^11\) 521 U.S. 702 (1997). Dale Carpenter thinks it significant that the Court did not mention Glucksberg (did Lawrence sub silentio abandon Glucksberg?), but argues that Lawrence and Glucksberg are nonetheless compatible. Dale Carpenter, Is Lawrence Libertarian?, 88 MINN. L. REV. 1140, 1163-65 (2004).
An additional and important consideration in understanding the scope of *Lawrence* is that Justice Kennedy’s opinion for the Court concluded with what I will call the “Exclusions Paragraph,” which lists the kinds of conduct that would be excluded from *Lawrence’s* protection and thus presumably still subject to criminal prohibition. Indeed, many courts have read *Lawrence’s* Exclusions Paragraph as absolute. In it, Justice Kennedy explains that the case does not involve minors, so sex crimes involving minors are excluded from *Lawrence’s* protection. It does not involve “public conduct or prostitution.” Homosexual marriage is not at issue. And finally, and most importantly for present purposes, Justice Kennedy says the case does not involve “persons who might be injured or coerced and who are situated in relationships where consent might not easily be refused.” But again, the Court is vague as to the universe of actors that this phrase contemplates. It might refer to those who cannot easily refuse consent because they fear harmful consequences of nonconsent based on some objective fact. For example, a woman only has sex with her boyfriend because has been sexually violent in the past

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12 *Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 578.

13 See, e.g., Muth v. Frank, 412 F.3d 808 (7th Cir. 2005) (holding *Lawrence* does not protect consensual adult incest); United States v. Palfrey, 499 F. Supp. 2d 34 (D.D.C. 2007) (holding *Lawrence* categorically does not protect prostitution); State v. Freitag, 130 P.3d 544 (Ariz. App. 2006) (same); State v. Van, 688 N.W.2d 600 (Neb. 2004) (holding *Lawrence* does not protect consensual sexual conduct involving bondage and sadomasochism because such conduct involves injury to the person). But see, e.g., State v. Limon, 122 P.2d 22 (Kan. 2005) (invalidating Kansas “Romeo and Juliet statute” on equal protection grounds, even though the case involved sex between an adult and a minor); Earle, 517 F.3d at 740 (invalidating state ban on sale of sexual devices, even though this arguably involves commercial sexual activity, like prostitution).

14 *Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 578.

15 *Id.*. While it might be argued that this portion of the Exclusions Paragraph can be read as not protecting any “commercial” sexual conduct, I am uncomfortable reading the language quite that broadly. See *Earle*, 517 F.3d at 740 (invalidating state ban on sale of sexual devices, pursuant to *Lawrence*). I therefore use the admittedly unwieldy (and, frankly, made-up) phrase “non--prostitution,” to indicate that prostitution is not protected by *Lawrence*, even if other sexual conduct with a commercial element may be.

16 *Id.*

17 *Id.*
and she fears he might become violent if she refuses, or a woman who receives a sexual proportion from her boss but has sex with him only because he tells her that she will be fired if she does not do so. Or it might refer to any relationship, regardless of consent given, involving some disparity in power or authority – even if that power or authority is not exerted and, indeed, even if the victim does not reasonably believe that such power or authority would be exerted – because the nature of the relationship creates at least some risk that the power disparity has induced the consent, which might not exist but for the power disparity.

Shortly after the Court decided Lawrence, a rich body of scholarship emerged debating the case’s meaning. For instance, in an important early piece, Randy Barnett analyzed what he saw as a major departure by Justice Kennedy from settled due process doctrine.18 Barnett sees Justice Kennedy’s approach as a potentially revolutionary one, if Justice Kennedy is serious about a new approach – an expansion of liberty, rather than privacy – based on his repeated references to “liberty” in the case.19 In response, Dale Carpenter rejected the notion of Lawrence as a libertarian opinion.20 Carpenter emphasizes the many ways in which Justice Kennedy’s opinion goes out of its way to limit the holding.21 As such, Carpenter argues that the best reading of Lawrence actually undermines the claims of those like Justice Scalia – whose dissent worried that the Lawrence opinion would usher in a new era of constitutional law in which legal restraints on sexuality were broadly invalidated by an activist and undemocratic judiciary22 – and

18 See Barnett, supra note __, at 21; see also Randy Barnett, Grading Justice Kennedy: A Reply to Professor Carpenter, 89 MINN. L. REV. 1582 (2005) (responding to Carpenter’s claims about libertarian aspects of Lawrence).
19 Barnett, supra note __, at 21.
20 See Carpenter, supra note __, at 1169.
21 Id. at 1148-69.
22 See Lawrence, 539 U.S. at 590-91 (Scalia, J., dissenting). Justice Scalia writes that,
those like Barnett, who actually hoped for a more libertarian approach than they actually received. The early scholarship, though, did not grapple primarily with Lawrence as a substantive criminal law limitation. More recently, Kelly Strader has done just that, articulating a vision of Lawrence as a distinctly criminal law decision. In Strader’s view, Lawrence embraces the criminal law’s harm principle (drawn, as he views it, essentially from Millian doctrine) and requires that the criminal law of sex punish only conduct that is actually harmful, not merely socially harmful in the abstract. Strader also rejects the claim of lower courts that the Exclusions Paragraph is an absolute bar to relief on any claim involving conduct that implicates that paragraph. Rather, he argues, that paragraph simply allowed the Court to reserve for another day those cases in which the conduct might involve some identifiable harm, a problem the Court did not have to confront in Lawrence because there clearly had been no showing of harm. Accordingly, although most of the academic commentary sees Lawrence as protecting a right to private, non-prostitution, consensual adult sex, the literature has been widely

State laws against bigamy, same-sex marriage, adult incest, prostitution, masturbation, adultery, fornication, bestiality, and obscenity are likewise sustainable only in light of Bowers’ validation of laws based on moral choices. Every single one of these laws is called into question by today’s decision; the Court makes no effort to cabin the scope of its decision to exclude them from its holding.

Id. at 590. As I will explain infra, this appears to be a gross overstatement.

23 Carpenter, supra note __, at 1141.


26 Strader, supra note __, at 58-60.

27 Id. at 59.
divergent as to the nature of the right that *Lawrence* protects and the kind and degree of judicial
scrutiny to which courts must subject sex crime legislation.

Quite apart from answering our questions about the constitutionally permissible scope of
sex crime legislation in America, then, *Lawrence* – ten years later, even – instead creates further
dilemmas for the criminal law of consensual sex, where those crimes do not involve minors,
commercial sex, public sex, force or coercion, or other exploitation contemplated in the
Exclusions Paragraph. These dilemmas are reflected in the existing scholarship on *Lawrence*,
including *Lawrence*’s significance as to criminal law matters ranging from the use of sexual
devices\(^28\) to incest\(^29\) and fornication.\(^30\) This reflects not mere academic interest but, perhaps
more importantly, a continued frustration about the Court’s vagueness and ambivalence
concerning a right that seems so socially vital, if not unlimited.

To wit, the constitutionality of criminal sanctions concerning both manner-of-sex and
category-of-victim range from the fairly easy cases to the far more difficult. Crimes punishing


\(^{30}\) See Amanda Connor, *Is Your Bedroom a Private Place? Fornication and Fundamental Rights*, 39 N.M. L. REV. 507 (2009) (evaluating *Seegmiller v. LaVerkin City*, 528 F.3d 762 (10th Cir. 2008), which held that there is no fundamental federal constitutional right to engage in consensual sex).

Bestiality, too, is a subject of some debate but I, for one, am less concerned with bestiality laws. Even on a
more libertarian reading of *Lawrence*, I am confident that the Court would find the state interests in public health
and protection of animals from abuse to be sufficient for upholding such criminal prohibitions. On this score, as on
others, I think Justice Scalia’s *Lawrence* dissent, *see Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 590 (Scalia, J., dissenting), overstated
his objections to the majority opinion – bestiality laws, among others, can be justified on grounds beyond mere
moral disapproval.
the manner of having sex range from traditional and reformed rape laws, to those that punish rape by obtained by fraud or seduction. Some variation of the latter problem is familiar: one person deceives another person in order to have sex with them. Those who teach criminal law materials on rape by fraud may well introduce it with a classic deception/seduction scenario: a man, D, looks very much like a famous actor, X. V, a woman, sees D and approaches him for conversation, believing that D is the famous actor X. She indicates this belief to him, and D perpetuates the falsehood, pretending to be X. He asks her if she wants to go to his hotel room, which she does willingly, and they have sex that is, in all apparent respects, consensual. Afterward, V realizes that D is not X and claims that her consent was limited to having sex with X, not D. Is this rape, or some other sex crime. Or, to put it in post-

Lawrence terms, can the state constitutionally criminalize sex obtained by deception, where the victim was not deceived as to the nature of the act and therefore knowingly and voluntarily consented to the sex?

Crimes involving consensual sex between categories of persons – what we might think of a prohibited sexual partners – are equally perplexing. Again, there are the easy and comparatively uncontroversial examples: a forty-year-old may not legally have sex with a ten-year-old, for example. Yet harder problems exist, such as barring a psychotherapist from engaging in consensual sexual relations with a patient, even if the therapeutic relationship between the two has ended. Or such as barring a twenty-three-year-old from having consensual sex with a nineteen-year-old, if the former is a teacher and the latter is a student at the teacher’s high school, or a thirty-year-old college professor from having private consensual sex

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32 See generally State v. Hollenbeck, 53 A.3d 591 (N.H. 2012) (holding Lawrence did not prevent enforcement of felonious sexual assault statute where a psychotherapist had consensual sex with former patient within one year of termination of therapeutic relationship).
with a twenty-five-year-old graduate student. Perhaps it is a preposterous notion that the Constitution might be thought to protect sex between a high school teacher and adult student, or between a psychotherapist and patient, without regard to the age of the parties or the consent between them. But if viewed at a somewhat broader level of abstraction – that the Constitution protects some right of consenting adults to engage in private non-prostitution sexual conduct, the level of abstraction arguably (if imprecisely) adopted in Lawrence – the proposition seems far less preposterous. It is therefore reasonable to ask whether these are among the kinds of consensual sexual relationships that Lawrence seeks to protect.33

Again, much has been said about Lawrence, fundamental rights, and the standard of review, and I do not wish in this Article to repeat the excellent dialogue on the case that appears in the existing literature. Nor is it necessary to do so here. Rather, this Article accounts for Lawrence in the following ways: (1) although Lawrence is a masterful judicial work of mystery, it is fair to conclude that Lawrence is (though it need not be) a relatively conservative opinion as to the criminal law of sex generally;34 (2) nevertheless, to have meaning or importance as a matter of constitutional law, Lawrence must protect something, and that is a right of some kind for adults to engage in private, consensual, non-prostitution sex that does not harm others or an institution that the state may protect;35 and (3) consequently, Lawrence is perhaps less

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33 There is an excellent body of academic literature on the enforcement of college and university policies forbidding sexual relationships between faculty and students. See, e.g., Paul M. Secunda, Lawrence’s Quintessential Millian Moment and Its Impact on the Doctrine of Unconstitutional Conditions, 50 VILL. L. REV. 117 (2005). I will refer to this body of literature more fully infra, Part III.

34 On this, I concur substantially with the reading of Lawrence that Carpenter expressed in his early article. See Carpenter, supra note __, at __.

35 It is possible to add an additional limit on the definition of the right, protecting it only when the sex occurs as part of an intimate relationship. See Lawrence, 539 U.S. at 567. Calvin Massey has described it this way. See Massey, supra note __, at 960-61. But more on this aspect of Lawrence, infra, Part III.D.
conservative, but still deeply ambiguous and ambivalent, as to the criminal law of private, consensual, non-prostitution adult sex.

With this understanding of Lawrence, this Article therefore explores this ambiguity as it relates to, and the extent to which Lawrence governs, the criminalization of sexual conduct that cannot plainly be proscribed pursuant to Lawrence’s Exclusions Paragraph: private, non-prostitution, consensual sex between adults. In doing so, this Article focuses upon two distinct areas of sex crimes which demonstrate the potential effects of Lawrence’s looseness and ambiguity. The first involves sex obtained by fraud or seduction, where the adult parties both consented to engaging in sexual activity, implicating the traditional criminal law distinction between fraud in the factum and fraud in the inducement. The second involves criminal laws governing forbidden sexual partners, with special attention given to the highly public matter of secondary school teacher-student sexual relationships between consenting adults. This Article argues that the loose and ambiguous language in Lawrence could have real implications for the criminal law of sex in America in these areas and others, and that the Court should rectify this shortcoming by clarifying the scope of the Lawrence right and its application in the world of crimes involving private, consensual, and non-prostitution adult sex. But even if Lawrence provides little additional constitutional protection for consensual adult sex, Lawrence’s real virtue actually lies in the narrative that it stimulates beyond constitutional rights – a political conversation about the overcriminalization, and overprosecution, of sex in America.

II. THE CRIMINALIZATION OF SEX OBTAINED BY FRAUD OR SEDUCTION
The stories and lies that one will perpetuate to persuade another into sex, range from the ridiculous to the bizarre and the truly detestable. But the criminal law must decide when such lies or misrepresentations produce such significant social harms that they warrant moral condemnation by the community. As a California court phrased one such problem when it reviewed a recent case, “[a] man enters the dark bedroom of an unmarried woman after seeing her boyfriend leave late at night and has sexual intercourse with the woman while pretending to be the boyfriend. Has the man committed rape?” No, the court said – or, yes, but only if she is married, because California makes it crime to have sex with a person where the actor deceives the victim into believing that the actor is her spouse. In 2010 in Israel, an Arab man who worked in Jerusalem had a sexual encounter with an Israeli woman who subsequently learned

36 See Patricia Falk, Rape by Fraud and Rape by Coercion, 64 BROOK. L. REV. 39 (1998) (compiling cases from several categories of rape by fraud). Falk’s piece is extraordinarily comprehensive. This Article does not seek to taxonomize rape by fraud in such a comprehensive way. Rather, it merely offers a synopsis of this category of sex crimes, where there is an issue as to the validity of consent, in order to frame the Lawrence-related constitutional problem. Accordingly, although Falk’s article covers both rape by fraud and rape by coercion, this Article excludes criminal prohibitions involving coercion, because those are clearly subject to the Exclusions Paragraph of Lawrence. See Lawrence, 539 U.S. at 578. For a truly comprehensive, if somewhat dated, account of these sex crimes, I highly recommend Falk’s piece.

37 People v. Morales, 150 Cal.Rptr.3d 920, 921-22 (Cal. App. 2nd Dist. 2013). Julio Morales was accused of entering Jane Doe’s bedroom after her boyfriend left and having sex with her while she was asleep. Id. at 923. He was convicted of rape of an unconscious person. See CAL. PENAL CODE § 261(a)(4).

A somewhat similar factual scenario arose in Connecticut in 2009. Police officer Jared Rohrig allegedly pretended to be his identical twin brother, Joe, in order to have sex with Joe’s girlfriend. During their sexual encounter, the girlfriend realized that Jared was not Joe because Jared did not have the tattoo that Joe had on his backside. See Ryan Smith, Twin Trouble: Ex-Cop Jared Rohrig Pleads Not Guilty to Posing as Brother for Sex, CBSNews.com, available at http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504083_162-5372039-504083.html (Oct. 12, 2009). He pleaded no contest to unlawful restraint and criminal impersonation; the State dropped the sexual assault charges. See Brian McReady, Ex-Orange cop avoids jail in Milford twin sex case, NEW HAVEN REGISTER, available at http://nhregister.com/articles/2012/03/10/news/doc4f5a96dd1e333c234493489.txt (March 10, 2012).

38 Morales, 150 Cal.Rptr.3d at 921-22, 929. The court’s conclusion was based on the fact that it was unclear whether the jury convicted Morales based on the theory that she was asleep (which would have been a valid theory) or on the theory that she was unconscious as to the nature of the act (which was not valid on these facts). Had the victim been married, Morales could have been convicted under the section of the Penal Code described above. See CAL. PENAL CODE § 261(a)(5).
that he was not Jewish. The woman never asked whether he was Jewish, nor did he tell her that he was Arab.

By all objective indications, according to one of the Israeli judges, the sex itself was consensual, but the woman complained afterward, saying she would never have had sex with him had she known he was not Jewish. As part of a plea bargain, he was convicted under local law of rape by deception. May American criminal law punish this conduct?

A. Traditional and Contemporary Approaches

The traditional rule in the law of rape was, as Joshua Dressler appropriately describes it, that a seducer is not a rapist. The rule was predicated upon the distinction between fraud in the factum and fraud in the inducement. Pursuant to one popular description of the doctrine, if the victim was deceived as to the nature of the sex act itself – that is, if the deception precluded her from knowing that she was consenting to sex – then the defendant could not escape liability by

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41 See Adetunji & Sherwood, supra note ___.

42 Id. Subsequently, media reports described a more complicated case in which the victim had complained of a forcible rape that was plea bargained to a reduced charge. See Rachel Shabi, Arab rape-by-deception charge was “result of a plea bargain,” THE GUARDIAN, available at http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/08/rape-by-deception-plea-israel (Sept. 8, 2010).

43 Joshua Dressler, UNDERSTANDING CRIMINAL LAW 594 (5th ed. 2009).

44 Id. See also Wayne R. LaFave, CRIMINAL LAW § 17.3(c) at 908 (5th ed. 2010) (explaining the distinction in the rape law context); Rollin M. Perkins & Ronald N. Boyce, CRIMINAL LAW 215 (3d. ed. 1982) (stating “consent induced by fraud is as effective as any other consent . . . if the deception related not to the thing done but merely to some collateral matter”); Joel Feinberg, Victims’ Excuses: The Case of Fraudulently Procured Consent, 96 ETHICS 330 (Jan. 1986)
claiming consent.\textsuperscript{45} This is fraud in the factum. On the other hand, if the victim knew that she was consenting to sex, and was deceived only as to some fact ancillary to the nature of the act of having sex, then the defendant could fairly claim that the victim consented and he could not be guilty of rape.\textsuperscript{46} Fraud in the inducement, then, was akin to what has been described by Susan Estrich as simply “old fashioned seduction.”\textsuperscript{47}

One of the most well-known cases on the factum-inducement distinction was the famed California case of \textit{Boro v. Superior Court}.\textsuperscript{48} The defendant Boro telephoned the victim, Ms. R., claiming to have blood test results that suggested she suffered from a deadly disease that resulted from the use of public toilets.\textsuperscript{49} Claiming to be “Dr. Stevens,” he told her that there were only two ways to treat the disease: one was a painful and expensive surgery, the other was to have sex with a man who could serve as a donor of a serum that would cure the disease.\textsuperscript{50} The latter option would cost her only $4,500, but when he was informed that she could not afford that option either, “Dr. Stevens” told her that $1,000 would be a sufficient down payment.\textsuperscript{51} Ms. R could not afford the surgery, so she agreed to the sexual encounter, and it was carried out in a hotel room with the anonymous donor (Boro).\textsuperscript{52} Ms. R said she believed she would die if she did

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\item \textsuperscript{45} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{46} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{47} Susan Estrich, \textit{Rape}, 95 YALE L.J. 1087, 1120 (1986).
\item \textsuperscript{48} 163 Cal. App.3d 1224 (Cal. App. 1985).
\item \textsuperscript{49} \textit{Id.} at 1226.
\item \textsuperscript{50} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{51} \textit{Id.}
\item \textsuperscript{52} \textit{Id.} at 1227.
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not get the “treatment.”53 Boro was charged with rape under California law but the California Supreme Court ruled that this was fraud in the inducement – and therefore not rape – because Ms. R fully and willingly consented to have sex with the unknown person, even though her reasons for doing so were predicated upon a fraud.54

Particularly in light of the rape reform movement that desired focus on the issue of consent, the factum-inducement distinction seemed troubling. After all, is all fraud in the inducement the same? Should there be a legally cognizable difference between a perpetrator claiming that he is a famous actor, on the one hand, and the perpetrator assuring a woman that he does not have a sexually transmitted disease, where the woman says she will sleep with him but only if he does not have an STD?55 Or, as Dressler and others have asked, would that lead to some absurd results (for example, a man would be guilty of rape if he told his girlfriend that he loved her, thus inducing her to have sex with him, even though he later admits that he never loved her)?56 In a comprehensive study of rape by deception and coercion, Patricia Falk described the factum-inducement dichotomy as “problematic” because it relies upon a formal legal distinction that fails to “critically examin[e] the types of fraudulent inducements that impugn the voluntariness of consent.”57

Perhaps the criminal law’s task, then, is to articulate

53 Id.

54 Id. at 1230-31. Boro is discussed in Morales. See Morales, 150 Cal.Rptr. at 927. Distinguish the cases in which consent was said to exist based on the factum-inducement dichotomy from those in which there is, for example, therapeutic deception as in Boro, but a conviction is improper because the state cannot prove the force required for rape. See Don Moran v. People, 25 Mich. 356 (1872) (doctor induced 15-year-old girl to have sex with him by falsely telling her that her father consented, that he treated all women with sex, and that the alternative was a painful procedure that would probably result in her death).


56 See DRESSLER, supra note __, at 584; see also Berger, supra note __, at 76-77 (1988) (asking whether we would say that a false “I love you” constitutes a material misrepresentation warranting liability for rape by fraud).

57 See Falk, supra note __, at 49.
some meaningful distinctions among the types of fraud in the inducement, imposing criminal sanctions upon frauds that work particular kinds of personal and social harms.

Some scholars like Susan Estrich began asking for a criminal law that sought to punish all sex obtained by deception.\textsuperscript{58} As Estrich popularly framed the question, why is it that we make it a crime to obtain someone’s property through fraud or deception, but we do not do the same when the fraud or deception is used to obtain sex?\textsuperscript{59} She compares the then-extant rape law to the law of false pretenses and theft by deception, and ultimately concludes that loss of bodily integrity is a “different and greater injury than loss of money.”\textsuperscript{60} Estrich does not claim that sex by fraud or deception ought to be treated and punished the same as traditional forcible rape, but she plainly wishes it to be criminalized.\textsuperscript{61} The factum-inducement distinction is inadequate.

Others, though, questioned criminalizing this kind of fraud broadly. Vivian Berger responded to Estrich’s paper, suggesting that many men who engage in such deceptions are despicable characters, but ought not to be called rapists.\textsuperscript{62} Unlike Estrich, who considers fraudulent sex and extortionate sex together, Berger separates the two and considers sex by extortion far more culpable.\textsuperscript{63} Berger says she has “minimal sympathy for the idea that the law should protect, via criminal sanctions, the cheated expectations of women who sought to sleep their way to the top but discovered, too late, that they were dealing with swindlers.”\textsuperscript{64} Similarly,
Donald Dripps—advancing the idea of a sexual expropriation offense that would capture certain conduct less serious than rape in which pressure short of violence or violent threats is exerted to obtain sex—conceded the strength of Estrich’s argument, but was also careful to distinguish extortionate sex from fraudulently obtained sex. Moreover, he wrote, in light of the complexity of sexual relationships and the difficulty of determining the causal relationship between sex and a particular deceit, proposals to criminally punish fraudulently obtained sex could result in the “sweeping criminalization of sex.” Dripps preferred instead to focus the sexual expropriation offense on the issue of consent and the disregard of words in intimate affairs, concluding that such conduct implicates interests in sexual autonomy though not in freedom from violence.

In modern criminal law, many states have taken seriously this scholarly debate and have adopted the notion that not all fraud in the inducement is the same and that at least some forms of deception should vitiate consent, even if the victim knew she was consenting to sex.

Shortly after Boro, for example, California changed its rape law and added a new provision, which now makes it a crime to induce a person to engage in certain sex acts where the victim’s consent is procured by false or fraudulent representation that “the sexual penetration served a professional purpose when it served no professional purpose.” Other states have also adopted sex-by-deception prohibitions that appear to abolish the factum-inducement distinction,


Id. at 1802.

Id. at 1802-03.

Id. at 1803. Dripps writes that, “[t]he gist of the new offense, then, would be to punish any one who purposely or knowingly engages in a sexual act with another person, knowing that the other person has expressed a refusal to engage in that act.” Id. at 1804.

See CAL. PENAL CODE § 261(a)(D).
some more punitive than others. In Tennessee, for example, sexual battery is a class E felony and includes sexual penetration where the penetration is “accomplished by fraud.”70 This is perhaps the broadest of all state criminal proscriptions of sex by deception. In State v. Tizard, the Tennessee Court of Criminal Appeals expressly rejected the argument that fraud only in the inducement would bar conviction under the statute.71 That court held that Tennessee law gave “fraud” its broadest meaning and holds that consent induced by deception is ineffective.72 Alabama also makes it the crime of sexual misconduct for a male to engage in sexual conduct with a female where consent “was obtained by the use of any fraud or artifice.”73 And Montana, for purposes of its sex crime provisions, provides that a victim is incapable of consent due to “deception, coercion, or surprise.”74 Beyond this broader category, many states have made sex by deception a crime in specific instances, making it a crime to deceive a person into believing that the perpetrator is the victim’s spouse, or into believing that the person is a physician or other person authorized to perform a medical procedure or any other professional service.75

B. Special Problems: Misrepresented Identity and Seduction

71 897 S.W.2d 732 (Tenn. Crim. App. 1994). There, a physician who had been treating a seventeen-year-old boy masturbated the boy, claiming that he was obtaining a semen sample to test white blood cells. Id. at 735-37. The physician argued that the victim was at all times aware that he was being masturbated and that he never objected; in fact, the victim continued receiving treatment and steroid injections from the physician, even after the initial masturbation. Id. at 740-41.
72 Id. at 741.
73 See ALA. CODE § 13A-6-65(a)(1).
74 MONT. CODE § 45-5-501(1)(a)(ii)(C).
75 See, e.g., CAL. PENAL CODE § 261(a)(D); COLO. REV. STAT. §§ 18-3-402(1)(c), (g); COLO. REV. STAT. §§ 18-3-405.5 (1)(a)(II), 2(a)(II); CONN. GEN. STAT. §§ 53a-71(a)(6), (7); KAN. STAT. 21-5503(a)(4); . . .
Not all states have gone so far as to make all fraudulently obtained sex a crime, continuing instead to recognize the traditional factum-inducement distinction. But that distinction is especially confounding in the mistaken (misrepresented?) identity cases. Does misrepresentation about being a famous actor or athlete work the same harms as misrepresentation about being a husband or fiancé?

In this sense, consider a different formulation of the factum-inducement distinction. As one court has stated it, in the case of a man convicted of rape under military law after having intercourse with a sleeping woman who had recently had intercourse with another man,

Clearly, fraud in the inducement includes such general knavery as: “No, I’m not married”; “Of course I’ll respect you in the morning”; “we’ll get married as soon as . . .”; “I’ll pay you _____ dollars”; and so on. Whatever else such tactics amount to, they are not rape.

The question is – what is fraud in the factum in the context of consensual intercourse? The better view is that “factum” involves both the nature of the act and some knowledge of the identity of the participant. Thus in the “doctor” cases, consent would not be present unless the patient realized that the “procedure” being employed was not medical, but sexual . . . [W]e take it that even the most uninhibited people ordinarily make some assessment of a potential sex partner . . . before consenting to sexual intercourse. Thus, consent to the act is based on the identity of the prospective partner.\footnote{United States v. Booker, 25 M.J. 114, 116 (Ct. Mil. App. 1987). The court found that Booker’s conduct was fraud in the factum. \textit{Id.}}

Notice how this formulation may well differ from the one described previously. Using the previous formulation, the person who pretends to be a famous actor, athlete, or musician, or who feigns employment as a talent scout\footnote{See, \textit{e.g.}, United States v. Condolon, 600 F.2d 7 (4th Cir. 1979) (defendant convicted of wire fraud after creating scheme to have sex with women whom he said he would assist in finding acting and modeling work).} or casting agent or famed fashion photographer,\footnote{See \textit{Falk, supra} note \_\_ at 69 (describing unpublished case of Oscar Kendall, who impersonated a famous fashion photographer in order to induce women into locations where he could have sex with them).} would be committing only fraud in the inducement, so long as the person from whom he obtained sex knew that she was consenting to sex. But using this latter formulation – if “factum” is predicated
upon either a belief that the act is something other than sex or a belief that the actor is not who he says he is — the same person would arguably be committing fraud in the factum, because he is deceiving the victim as to his identity. Consent, on this view, would be ineffective even if the victim knew she was consenting to sex because her consent would be based on the man’s assumed identity and, we can say, she would not have consented but for that assumption.

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in *Suliveres v. Commonwealth* continued to recognize the traditional factum-inducement distinction where the defendant had sex with a woman by impersonating his brother, the woman’s boyfriend. The room was dark and the woman assumed that the man was her boyfriend. The two then had sex. The court said this was fraud in the inducement and prohibited defendant’s prosecution for rape, recognizing that “[f]raudulently obtaining consent to sexual intercourse does not constitute rape as defined in our statute.” Contrast this with the same court’s decision in *Commonwealth v. Caracciola*. There, the victim entered the Caracciola’s car after he instructed her to get off of the street where she was walking. She noticed that he was wearing a firearm. He made statements implying that he was a police officer, such as when he said that if the victim did not stop crying, he would “lock [her] up for more things than [he] was planning on.” After stopping in a nearby

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79 865 N.E.2d 1086 (Mass. 2007).
80 Id. at 1088.
81 Id. The victim said she was “not fully awake” at the time of the penetration. Id.
82 Id. at 1091.
84 Id. at 775.
85 Id.
86 Id.
school parking lot, the defendant began touching the victim’s legs. The court disagreed. Caracciola’s conduct and threats about incarcerating the victim, combined with his misrepresentations about being a police officer, were sufficient to constitute constructive force, which was sufficient to satisfy the Commonwealth’s rape statute. These cases illustrate the more traditional approach in which fraud will not substitute for force, but where force is actually or constructively present, a rape conviction would be appropriate.

Even more problematic are the mistaken identity cases that result in *adulterous* sex – where the perpetrator fraudulently leads the victim to believe that he is the victim’s spouse. Courts have substantially disagreed as to whether this is rape. One approach suggests that, regardless of the nature of the misrepresentation and the nature of the resulting sex, the sex is nonetheless consensual, and thus fraudulently pretending to be the victim’s spouse is merely

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87 *Id.*

88 *Id.*

89 *Id.*

90 *Id.* at 777.

91 *Id.* at 778.

92 See Falk, *supra* note __, at 66.
fraud in the inducement. Other courts, however, suggest that this amounts to rape – as fraud in the factum – because the consent given is to the act of marital sex, not to adulterous sex, and the resulting adulterous sex is more harmful. This latter view is consistent with the latter formulation of the factum-inducement distinction mentioned above: even though the victim knew she was consenting to sex, the perpetrator is still guilty of rape because he worked a deception as to the nature of the act, but that deception is based upon her mistake as to his identity. Consequently, the mistaken identity cases depend not simply upon whether the jurisdiction recognizes the factum-inducement distinction, but also upon which variation or understanding of that distinction applies.

Finally, a small group of states today have statutes that separately criminalize seduction. At one point, gender-specific seduction crimes were pervasive in the United States. At common law, seduction was merely a tort. Yet by the early twentieth century (prior to the admission of Alaska and Hawaii) thirty-seven states had enacted criminal seduction statutes. One of the early seduction laws was actually a forerunner of the current teacher-student sex bans: Ohio in 1886 enacted a law that prevented a man over age twenty-one who was a superintendent,

93 See, e.g., Lewis v. State, 30 Ala. 54 (1857) (holding no rape occurred where slave entered bed of a white woman and had sex with her, as she thought Lewis was her husband). See also LaFave, supra note __, at 908 (explaining various approaches).

94 See Regina v. Dee, 15 Cox 579 (1884). See also Ann Coughlin, Sex and Guilt, 84 VA. L. REV. 1 (1998) (arguing that fraud should negate consent where victim believed she was having sex with husband). Cf. Feinberg, supra note __, at 345 (explaining that misrepresentation that induces adulterous sex results in more serious harm than other types of misrepresentations of identity, the difference between “suffering an evil and missing a good”).

95 See H.W. Humble, Seduction As a Crime, 21 COLUM. L. REV. 144 (1921).

96 Id. at 154. See also Brian Donovan, Gender Inequality and Criminal Seduction: Prosecuting Sexual Coercion in the Early Twentieth Century, 30 LAW & SOC. INQUIRY 61, 65-66 (2005) (stating that seduction existed as a tort since the Colonial era); Lea Vandervelde, The Legal Ways of Seduction, 48 STAN. L. REV. 817, 867 (1996) (discussion seduction in tort); Larsen, supra note __, at 379 (discussion history of seduction in tort).

97 Humble, supra note __, at 144.
tutor, or teacher from having sexual intercourse with any female under his instruction, even
where the sex was consensual.98 The law “conclusively presumed that the tutor was a vile
seducer, the pupil an innocent victim.”99 By the early twentieth century, in most seduction
jurisdictions the law had evolved and seduction required a false or pretended promise of
marriage.100 In other states, seduction typically barred the seduction and debauchery of a woman
of chaste or virtuous character.101 Notably, though, these statutes were “broad enough to cover
practically every case of intercourse with consent,”102 as seduction was understood to encompass
“the use of arts, persuasions, or wiles to overcome the resistance of the female who is not
disposed, of her volition, to step aside from the path of virtue. . . . Any seductive arts or
promises, where the female involuntarily or reluctantly yields thereto, are sufficient.”103

Interestingly, then, conduct that might well exculpate a man from the crime of rape
because it is merely fraud in the inducement could actually subject him to criminal liability
pursuant to a seduction statute, if the woman fit the statutory character requirement. This may
seem inconsistent with the idea that a person should be free of criminal responsibility where the
woman knowingly consents to sexual intercourse, which is the defining element of fraud in the
inducement doctrine. But seduction laws were predicated upon a different concern: that a chaste
or virtuous woman would not have consented to the sex, but for the enticements of the

98 See FRIEDMAN, supra note __, at 219.
99 Id.
100 Humble, supra note __, at 145-50.
101 Id. at 146-47.
102 Id. at 146.
103 Id. (quoting State v. O’Hare, 36 Wash. 516, 518 (1904)).
Not unlike rape law, as well as criminal prohibitions on adultery, the preservation of female virtue, it turns out, has been identified as the core concern of seduction legislation.\textsuperscript{105} The ruination of a female was taken so seriously that not only was it the object of criminal legislation, it also gave rise to what Lawrence Friedman has described as the “unwritten law” that justified the use of force or violence (often deadly) by a man in defense of his wife’s, daughter’s, mother’s, or sister’s personal honor.\textsuperscript{106} Still, others have suggested that, despite the modern view of criminal seduction as a product of a paternalistic and sexually repressive bygone era, those laws were actually important tools for combating sexual violence and coercion and “acted as an instrument of social justice for vulnerable working-class and immigrant women.”\textsuperscript{107}

Later in the twentieth century, many states abandoned their seduction laws as part of a growing trend of “anti-heart-balm” statutes designed to account for more active female sexuality.\textsuperscript{108} Still, today, a few seduction statutes remain notable. In Mississippi, it is seduction (punishable by up to five years) to obtain carnal knowledge of any woman of previous chaste character by virtue of a feigned or pretended marriage or a false promise to marry.\textsuperscript{109} Oklahoma has a similar seduction statute that makes it a crime to have sex with a woman under false promise to marry.\textsuperscript{110} Michigan has the broadest seduction prohibition that does not require a

\textsuperscript{104} See FRIEDMAN, supra note __, at 218-20.

\textsuperscript{105} Id.

\textsuperscript{106} Id. at 221-22.

\textsuperscript{107} Donovan, supra note __, at 83.

\textsuperscript{108} See id. at 82; Larsen, supra note __, at 393-97.

\textsuperscript{109} MISS. CODE § 97-29-55.

\textsuperscript{110} 21 OKLA. STAT. § 1120.
false promise of marriage: it is a felony punishable by up to five years for a man simply to seduce and debauch an unmarried woman.\textsuperscript{111}

Most states, then, punish some form of fraudulent sex or sex by inducement or enticement. The traditional factum-inducement distinction has broken down, both in the law of rape and in the law of other sex crimes. What we see in modern criminal law, then, is a realization of Falk’s observation that the question is not whether to criminalize sex by deception, but rather what \textit{kinds} of deception will suffice for criminal liability.\textsuperscript{112} And yet in some jurisdictions, most any deception will suffice. This trend is evidence of an American criminal law in which the pendulum has swung toward making non-consent the essential defining element of modern rape, where some categories of fraud that do not deceive as to the nature of the act may be said to vitiate what would otherwise be consent in fact to sex.

\textbf{C. Lawrence and the Sex by Fraud or Seduction Crimes}

If \textit{Lawrence} protects a right to engage in private, consensual, adult sexual activity, then, the argument might run, \textit{Lawrence} could possibly provide a \textit{very} narrow avenue of protection for a defendant accused of a seduction or sexual deception crime where the sex was \textit{in fact} consensual. Although the case law does not appear to address any situations post-\textit{Lawrence} in which a defendant has been accused of a seduction or sex-by-deception crime and has made such an argument relying on \textit{Lawrence}, there remains a tiny category of prosecutions in which such an argument would at least be plausible, but it would almost certainly have to involve a seduction statute like the one in Michigan – a rare statute that is seldom enforced. Rape by fraud likely

\textsuperscript{111} \textsc{Mich. Comp. Laws § 750.532.}

\textsuperscript{112} \textit{See} Falk, \textit{supra} note __, at __.
contains a sufficient element of exploitation (and in some cases, much more than this) to at least justify state regulation in the abstract and would fall outside of *Lawrence’s* protection.

The problem, for a criminal defendant, is this: if the state defines consent as being vitiated by fraud (even where fraud was in the inducement), then the sex is by definition nonconsensual and is thus outside the zone of *Lawrence’s* protection. If the state retains a factum-inducement distinction and the fraud is merely in the inducement, then state criminal law cannot reach the defendant in the first place and the protection of *Lawrence* is unnecessary. Consequently, in the former situation, the defendant would have to argue that *Lawrence* constitutionalizes the factum-inducement distinction and forbids state law from defining something as nonconsensual where the common law would not have vitiated consent. This is likely asking far too much of the Court and of *Lawrence*. Of the crimes implicated in this Part, then, the best candidates for attack pursuant to *Lawrence* are the seduction crimes, where applied to a seductive sex between adults.

Of course, rape obviously falls outside of any constitutional protection. But, for a challenger, the relevant question is which understanding of rape we mean when we say this. Is it possible, one might ask, that Justice Kennedy was sufficiently aware of the factum-inducement distinction in rape law that his opinion sought to ensure constitutional protection for that distinction, or that he did so unwittingly? The predicate to the right recognized in *Lawrence*, as Cass Sunstein has observed, is consent. If *Lawrence* functions only pursuant to the traditional factum-inducement distinction, then situations where fraud in the factum exists would be unprotected by *Lawrence* because fraud in the factum vitiates the consent given. But because fraud in the inducement does not vitiate consent, then it could plausibly be argued that sex

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obtained by fraud in the inducement is at least presumptively protected under the umbrella of \textit{Lawrence}, even if state law does not follow that legal distinction. That would need to be a very large umbrella, however, because it assumes that the Court meant to constitutionalize the factum-inducement distinction – and there is virtually no evidence from \textit{Lawrence} that this is the case. Indeed, \textit{Lawrence} says “coercion” and “injury” explicitly, though it does not mention fraud or deception.\textsuperscript{114} Perhaps this was meant to be Justice Kennedy’s way of simply reinforcing the obvious point that rape would not be included in any constitutional protections, and that “coercion” only means sex obtained by force or threat. But if coercion is understood to mean sex obtained by fraud or deception – a fair understanding\textsuperscript{115} – then it is fair to conclude that \textit{all} fraudulent sex falls outside of \textit{Lawrence}’s small universe of protection. Sexual deception as coercion makes sense, especially if we adopt a deeper, and broader, understanding of harm. Coercion involving a threat places the victim in a position where she cannot reasonably will a choice to refuse consent. With sexual deception, she can still choose not to have sex, but the decision to do so is not made on the basis of accurate information, and the deceiver is culpable for the misinformation. Consequently, the consent given may fairly be said to be unknowing, even unintelligent. In this sense, the victim of the fraud is deprived of her autonomy and bodily integrity, just as a person who engaged in sex via force or threat. As Jane Larsen has written, “deception into sex is not as physically injurious as rape by force; yet like rape, sexual fraud falls on the wrong side of the consent line.”\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114} See \textit{Lawrence}, 539 U.S. at 578.

\textsuperscript{115} See \textit{LAFAVE}, supra note __, at 909 (placing rape-by-fraud cases in category of “coercion”).

\textsuperscript{116} See Larsen, \textit{supra} note __, at 414. Larsen is speaking in the context of tort actions, but her conclusions about the harm done and the relationship of fraud and consent seems to apply equally in the area of criminalization.
So if (as is likely) *Lawrence* does not constitutionalize the factum-inducement distinction, political actors therefore retain the latitude to define what conduct vitiates consent. In Tennessee criminal law, for example, all fraud negates consent.\(^{117}\) Tennessee could not enforce such a rule if *Lawrence* constitutionalized the factum-inducement dichotomy. And of course, it seems on its face difficult to suggest that the Constitution would forbid the states from defining sex crimes in a way that ensures protection from certain harms the state can reasonably identify. Yet complicated questions arise if we merely defer to the state’s judgment that certain sexual situations cannot, by definition, be consensual. Merely saying that states should be able to define consent, while likely true, is not unproblematic. One could plausibly argue that such a rule would allow states to dictate the scope of the right, and it could undermine some truly consensual sexual relationships that the constitutional law might otherwise wish to foster or at least grudgingly protect. Consent, on this reading, has no independent constitutional meaning. It is solely a creature of state law, and thus the scope of the *Lawrence* right is dependent upon the content of state law. Furthermore, to say that consent ought to have some constitutional dimension when it is part of a standard for determining the scope of a constitutional right is not inconsistent with the Court’s work in other areas of criminal case adjudication. In the constitutional criminal procedure context, for example, the Court has been willing to define consent for purposes of determining the scope of Fourth Amendment protection.\(^{118}\) But, of course, *Lawrence* did not do this, and it is fair to assume that when *Lawrence* speaks of “consensual” sex, it means “consensual” as defined by the relevant state criminal law.


\(^{118}\) See, e.g., Scheckloth v. Bustamonte, 412 U.S. 218 (1973) (holding that consent to search is valid when it is voluntary under the totality of the circumstances).
Moreover, in other contexts the Court has recognized a constitutional right and allowed the states the latitude to determine whether the right is implicated based on definitions the state creates.\footnote{See, e.g., Atkins v. Virginia, 536 U.S. 304 (2002) (allowing states to define mental retardation for purposes of determining who can be executed). \textit{Atkins} held that the Eighth Amendment bars the execution of a person who is mentally retarded. The Court, however, explicitly left to the states the task of determining who fall into the category of persons for whom there was a national consensus against execution. \textit{Id.} at 317.} In short, had the Court meant to give constitutional dimension to “consent” in \textit{Lawrence} it could have explicitly done so, even going so far as to say that the right to private, non-prostitution, consensual adult sex is informed by the legal tradition of the factum-inducement dichotomy. But \textit{Lawrence} did no such thing.

None of this is to say that all sex by fraud or deception ought to be criminalized, but rather that the state would have a rational basis, beyond mere moral disapproval, for concluding that the conduct is worthy of condemnation, thus leaving the conduct outside the scope of constitutional (as opposed to legislative) protection. Here, then, Justice Kennedy may have been a bit sloppy. \textit{Lawrence} could, and should, have more explicitly identified the kinds of harmful conduct in relation to sex that remain unprotected. Even if we can say that the sex was “consensual” as that term is understood in the context of the factum-inducement distinction, sex obtained by deception still has the ring of, if not the actual taint of, exploitation. For this reason, the more conservative reading of \textit{Lawrence} would likely forbid constitutional protection.

\textit{Lawrence} might be fatal, however, to seduction as a crime, at least as it is enforced in the Michigan statute, which makes it a felony punishable by five years in prison for a man to “seduce and debauch” an unmarried woman.\footnote{\textsc{Mich. Comp. Laws} § 750.532.} Because seduction can include “arts, persuasions, or wiles,”\footnote{See Humble, \textit{supra} note __, at 146 (quoting State v. O’Hare, 36 Wash. 516, 518 (1904)).} and not necessarily deception as it is practiced in the fraud cases or
even in the breach of promise to marry statutes, some acts of seduction – understood broadly –
may not implicate an interest against sexual violence nor involve the same kind of autonomy
interest or interest against exploitation that exists with respect to the sexual fraud crimes. Rather,
one commonly accepted reading of the history of seduction suggests that it was primarily
designed to promote a purely moral interest: preserving womanly virtue (and in the case of the
Michigan statute, the virtue of an unmarried woman in particular).122 Even on the judicially
conservative reading of Lawrence described here, Lawrence would likely view this as precisely
the kind of moral interest that does not deserve vindication. Consequently, if sex between adults
is obtained by seduction, is otherwise consensual in fact, private and non-prostitution, and did
not involve deception of a kind that would implicate the state’s interest in protecting the victim
against exploitation, a defendant accused of seduction could plausibly claim the protection of
Lawrence and at least force the state to defend the application of the statute on grounds other
than preserving female virtue (and the more recent literature on seduction suggests the state may
have additional justifications, given appropriate facts).123 This is hardly enough to make
Lawrence meaningfully more libertarian in practice, however, because of the rarity of such
statutes and the even greater rarity of seduction prosecutions involving the factual situation
described here. Nevertheless, to the extent that statutes like the one in Michigan are used by

122 See FRIEDMAN, supra note __, at 217-20.
123 See, e.g., Donovan, supra note __, at 71-82 (discussing Nineteenth Century seduction cases and comparing
them to modern “date rape” scenarios); Larsen, supra note __, at ___ (arguing that sexual fraud should be an
actionable tort). In light of the justifications given by those like Larsen, it is at least conceivable that some of those
same justifications – beyond moral wrong – could validate criminal statutes on seduction.
prosecutors as the basis for either a criminal trial or for negotiating a plea.\textsuperscript{124} Prosecutors should be aware at least of the vulnerability of seduction crimes after \textit{Lawrence}.

\section*{III. The Criminalization of Consensual Sex Between Specific Categories of Adults}

\textit{Lawrence} makes clear that sex between people of the same gender is not subject to criminal proscription, at least where it is private, consensual, and non-prostitution, and where the proscription is justified only on grounds of preserving public morals.\textsuperscript{125} But other categories of sexual partners potentially implicate concerns beyond simply public morality, even when the sex is private, (apparently) consensual, and between adults. The criminal law forbids sexual conduct between, for example, persons whose sexual contact would be incestuous;\textsuperscript{126} between psychotherapists and their patients (even former patients);\textsuperscript{127} and between members of the clergy and persons who are seeking spiritual aid, comfort, or therapy from the clergyman.\textsuperscript{128} But perhaps the most publicly prominent category of forbidden sexual partners is that of teacher and student. Instances of teacher-student sex are now regularly covered by the mass media, most often where the student is in secondary school.\textsuperscript{129} And – not unlike many other things in life that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} For an interesting comment on this, see Eugene Volokh, \textit{Recent Michigan Prosecutions for “Seducing an Unmarried Woman,”} The Volokh Conspiracy, \url{http://www.volokh.com/2010/06/08/recent-michigan-prosecutions-for-seducing-an-unmarried-woman} (posted June 8, 2010).
\item \textsuperscript{125} \textit{See} \textit{Lawrence}, 539 U.S. at 572, 578.
\item \textsuperscript{126} \textit{See} Muth v. Frank, 412 F.3d 808 (7th Cir. 2005).
\item \textsuperscript{127} \textit{See} State v. Hollenbeck, 53 A.3d 591 (N.H. 2012). Admittedly, this area of sex crimes is worthy of additional academic and judicial attention, in light of \textit{Lawrence}.
\item \textsuperscript{128} \textit{See} State v. Dutton, 450 N.W.2d 189 (Minn. App. 1990).
\item \textsuperscript{129} For an interesting and useful gallery and synopsis of highly-publicized student-teacher sex scandals, see \textit{Notorious teacher sex scandals}, CBSNews.com, available at \url{http://www.cbsnews.com/2300-504083_162-10004533-1.html}. These include, as just a few examples, the cases of Mary Kay Latourneau, a Seattle teacher who began a sexual relationship with a male student when he was twelve years old and whom she eventually married and
drive political action – as more and more instances of teacher-student sex invade the public’s consciousness, the more likely politicians are to respond with legislation, including criminal legislation. But even the desirable notion of protecting young people from sexual exploitation by those with supervisory or other authority over them has its limits. This section explores some cases in which those limits have been, or could be, tested, in light of Lawrence.

A. Representative Post-Lawrence Cases of Sex Between Teachers and Adult Students

Brittni Colleps was recently sentenced by a Texas court to five years in prison for engaging in consensual sex with other adults in the privacy of her home. The legal problem for Colleps: she was a public school teacher, and the adults with whom she had sex were students enrolled at her school. Colleps was an English teacher at Kennedale High School in north Texas.\(^{130}\) Over the course of two months at her private home, Colleps had sex with five Kennedale High students, including group sex with as many as four students.\(^{131}\) One student received oral sex from Colleps but did not have intercourse with her.\(^{132}\) One encounter was captured on a cell phone video recorded by one of the students, though it did not show Colleps’s

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had children with; Debra LaFave, a Florida teacher who had sex with a 14-year-old student; Pamela Rogers Turner, a Tennessee teacher who was convicted after having sex with a 13-year-old student; Amber Jennings, a Massachusetts teacher who was accused of having sex with, and sending nude photos to, a 16-year-old student, and who eventually pleaded guilty on the nude photo charges; and most recently, Sarah Jones, a former Kentucky teacher and Cincinnati Bengals cheerleader who had a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old student. See id.


\(^{131}\) Id.

\(^{132}\) Id.
face. All of the students were at least eighteen years old and thus fully capable of consenting to sex under Texas law. Yet Colleps was charged under a Texas criminal statute that forbids improper relationships between an educator and student, a second degree felony. In August 2012, a jury convicted Colleps on all sixteen counts of the crime.

Of course, Colleps’s case differs in significant respects from many of the teacher-student sex cases that have become so red hot in media coverage. First, several facts distinguish Colleps in ways that make her unsympathetic: she engaged in group sex, which might suggest that the sex was not related to an expression of love or in furtherance of a committed relationship; the sex was captured on video; and she exchanged sexually explicit text messages with the students. On the other hand, rather than having sex with students properly characterized as “children” or “minors,” Colleps had sex only with students who were adults. Indeed, prosecutors could not charge Colleps with statutory rape, leaving them with the “improper relationship” statute as their criminal law refuge against her. While Lawrence might appear to supply Colleps with some basis for challenging the application of the improper relationship statute here, the relevant cases have not read Lawrence so liberally.

First, consider how Texas courts have treated their own statute. In Ex Parte Morales, a male “Student Activites/Recreation Assistant” at a private Baptist school was convicted pursuant

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133 Id. Colleps was recently the subject of a feature on ABC’s news program 20/20. In the interview, Colleps suggests that she was victimized because she never gave her consent for the students to shoot the video. See Jim Dubreuil, Teacher Who Had Group Sex With Students Says She’s the Victim, http://abcnews.go.com/US/brittni-colleps-texas-teacher-group-sex-students-shes/story?id=17338821#UOcyI6zTzoM (posted Sept. 28, 2012).

134 See TEX. PENAL CODE ANN. § 21.011(c)(1).


to the improper sexual relationship statute for having sex with a male student at the school who was over the legal age of consent.\textsuperscript{137} Morales claimed a fundamental right to “adult consensual sexual activity” and lodged a facial attack on the statute’s constitutionality, citing \textit{Lawrence}.\textsuperscript{138} The Texas Court of Appeals upheld the statute. According to the court, \textit{Lawrence} did not establish a fundamental right and thus only rational basis review applied.\textsuperscript{139} The court had little difficulty concluding that the state had multiple rational bases for the law, despite Morales’s contention that the law was so broad as to be not rationally related to a legitimate state interest in punishing predatory or coercive sex.\textsuperscript{140} First, the state has a rational interest in preventing the exploitation of “schoolchildren” and in concluding that that students might not easily be able to refuse consent where the sexual partner is an educator, taking the conduct outside of \textit{Lawrence}’s protection.\textsuperscript{141} The court emphasized that Morales’s challenge was a facial one, not an as-applied one, and thus the statute would unquestionably be constitutional in situations involving minor students.\textsuperscript{142} In any event, it did not matter that the student in this case was legally an adult because the legislature could have rationally concluded that those “clothed with the imprimatur of school employment . . . will possess the sort of power disparities enabling them to coerce or unduly influence students to engage in sexual conduct.”\textsuperscript{143} The statute also advances the rational

\textsuperscript{137} 212 S.W.3d 483, 486-87 (Tex. App. - Austin 2006).

\textsuperscript{138} \textit{Id.} at 489-91.

\textsuperscript{139} \textit{Id.} at 491-93.

\textsuperscript{140} \textit{Id.} at 495.

\textsuperscript{141} \textit{Id.} at 495-96. I emphasize in quotations that court’s reference (which appears repeatedly in the opinion) to protecting Texas “schoolchildren.” The reference suggests that the court was primarily concerned about the law’s legitimate application to minors; otherwise, because the victim in this case was an adult, the description would seem both inappropriate and misplaced as a way of describing this victim.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{143} \textit{Id.} at 496.
goal of preserving trust and confidence in the school system by prohibiting sex between a student and those whose employment gives them access to students “as a conduit for sex.”\textsuperscript{144} And finally, the State has a rational basis, consistent with the tenets of the Texas Constitution regarding public education, in having an educational environment conducive to learning.\textsuperscript{145} That goal could be undermined if school employees could have sex with students.\textsuperscript{146} In short, teachers are not similarly situated to the kinds of private actors who were prosecuted in \textit{Lawrence}.\textsuperscript{147} They occupy positions of public trust and, as a result, it is reasonable for the State to constrain their sexual activities when the object of their sexual desires is a student, someone they teach or supervise.\textsuperscript{148}

\textit{State v. Clinkenbeard}\textsuperscript{149} involved a similar improper relationship statute in Washington. There, Clinkenbeard, a bus driver who was sixty-two years old at the time of his conviction, formed a relationship with a twelve-year-old girl who rode Clinkenbeard’s bus.\textsuperscript{150} The relationship continued to develop as the girl aged, but does not appear to have been sexual.\textsuperscript{151} She took music lessons from him when she was in the ninth grade and they had frequent phone

\textsuperscript{144} Id.

\textsuperscript{145} Id. at 496-97 (citing TEX. CONSTIT. art. VII, § 1, which provides that “a general diffusion of knowledge is essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of a free people,” and that the state legislature has a duty “to establish and make suitable provision for the support and maintenance of an efficient system of public free schools.”).

\textsuperscript{146} Id. at 497-98.

\textsuperscript{147} Id. at 497.

\textsuperscript{148} Id. The court of appeals was asked to reconsider the soundness of Morales in Berkovsky v. State, 209 S.W.3d 252 (Tex. App. – Waco 2006), and rejected the defendant’s facial challenge to the statute. Id. at 253.

\textsuperscript{149} 123 P.3d 872 (Wash. App. 2005).

\textsuperscript{150} Id. at 875-76.

\textsuperscript{151} Id. at 876. There was evidence that he had touched her buttocks and kissed her. Id.
When the girl turned eighteen, Clinkenbeard divorced his wife, moved his trailer next to the girl’s home, and then had sex on multiple occasions with the girl. Although she had already turned eighteen when they first had sex, she was still enrolled in the school district. The jury acquitted Clinkenbeard on multiple counts of child molestation but convicted him under a statute that makes it a felony for a school employee to have sexual intercourse with a student where the student is at least sixteen but not more than twenty-one, and where there is more than a five-year age difference between the student and employee. The statute does not require authority over or supervision of the student. The Washington Court of Appeals upheld the statute against Clinkenbeard’s Lawrence claim. The court found – applying only rational basis review, based on its conclusion that Lawrence “did not employ fundamental rights analysis” – that the State had a legitimate interest in protecting children from sexual exploitation, particularly in the educational environment. Here, although there was no evidence that Clinkenbeard and the girl ever had sex prior to her turning eighteen, their personal relationship began when she was twelve, thus raising the concern that Clinkenbeard’s school employment-based access to the girl offered him an opportunity to “groom or coerce” her into

152 Id.
153 Id.
154 Id.
155 Id. Curiously, the statute defines the crime as sexual misconduct with a minor. See RCW 9A.44.093(1)(b) (defining sexual misconduct with a minor in the first degree as a class C felony). Yet the statute applies to actors who have sex with students who are legally adults, as in this case.
156 Clinkenbeard, 123 P.3d at 876.
157 Id. at 878. Interestingly, when considering Clinkenbeard’s equal protection challenge, the court recognized that Lawrence “did make clear that this area of autonomy is of great importance,” and “cautions strongly against the state interfering in private relationships.” Id. at 880. The court was suggesting that perhaps an argument for intermediate scrutiny could be successfully made.
158 Id. at 879.
sex. It was therefore reasonable for the State here to apply this statute, the purpose of which is to protect children from those who would use their access to sexually exploit them.

Most recently, the Kansas Court of Appeals rejected a Lawrence-based challenge to that state’s unlawful sexual relations statute in State v. Edwards. There, a thirty-year-old choir instructor at a Wichita area high school had consensual sex with an eighteen-year-old student of his. The Kansas statute made it a crime for “a teacher or a person in a position of authority” to engage in consensual sex, lewd fondling or touching, or sodomy with a student enrolled at the offender’s school. “Teacher” is defined broadly to include any professional employee at the school (kindergarten through the twelfth grade) and the statute makes no distinctions based on age. In a somewhat confusing opinion that applied two distinct standards of review (rational basis and strict scrutiny), the court held that Lawrence did not recognize a fundamental right and that the State’s interests in this law were sufficient to protect it from constitutional challenge.

Repeatedly emphasizing the power disparity between teachers and students, the court said that teachers “have constant access to students, often in an unsupervised context. Thus, teachers are in a unique position to groom or coerce students into exploitive or abusive conduct.”

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159 Id.
160 Id.
162 Id. at 496-97. It was undisputed that the student transported herself to Edwards’s home and gave him a condom to use, and that the student was a mother (a fact that the state argued had no relevance). Id.
163 See KAN. STAT. ANN. 21-3520(a)(8).
164 Id. 3520(b)(9). The statute was actually amended to eliminate age distinctions. Edwards, 288 P.2d at 503.
165 Id. at 502.
166 Id. at 502. See also State v. McKenzie-Adams, 915 A.2d 822 (Conn. 2007), overruled in part on other grounds by State v. Payne, 34 A.3d 370 (Conn. 2012). In McKenzie-Adams, the Connecticut Supreme Court upheld that state’s statute prohibiting sex between a school employee and student. Id. There, the court held that even if a
a “sexually charged learning environment would confuse, disturb, and distract students, thus undermining the quality of education in Kansas.” The court further explained that *Lawrence* does not protect this sexual activity because this is a relationship where consent might not easily be refused: students are required by law to attend the school, are a captive audience, and “very well may not have the necessary level of maturity to remove themselves from a sexually charged situation.” The court shifted its discussion of the standard of review, holding that the statute is narrowly tailored to serve a compelling interest because it does not infringe upon “any sexual activity unrelated to the job of teachers and does not prevent teachers from having sexual relationships with adults who are not students.” Finally, the court rejected Edwards’s arguments that the statute fails strict scrutiny: it did not matter if the statute was enacted only to appease a single parent who was upset over a teacher-student relationship; it did not matter that the same sexual relationship would have been lawful if Edwards was a college professor; and it did not matter that courts in Iowa and Idaho had rejected civil liability for teacher-student sex.

The *Morales* and *Edwards* opinions delve more thoroughly than does *Clinkenbeard* into the legitimate interests of the state. Yet in each case the court seems preoccupied with the state’s effort to protect “children” and substantially ignores the relevance of the fact that the sex

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168 *Id.*
169 *Id.* at 503.
170 *Id.* at 504.
occurred between consenting adults, which would seem to matter on an as-applied challenge. Had the applicable standard of review been one involving heightened scrutiny, these courts would likely have been forced to more meaningfully confront the argument that the state’s interests in protecting children from exploitation seem reduced (though not eliminated) in significance when the student becomes an adult and where there is no evidence of actual coercion or exploitation in the case. Edwards, for example, identifies the risk of exploitation but does not address whether the absence of actual exploitation ought to matter to the application of the statute in a given case, preferring instead to characterize the teacher-student relationship as inherently coercive and as preventing meaningful opportunity to refuse consent. The court there assumed in one paragraph that students generally may fail to possess the necessary maturity to refuse consent, but in the next paragraphs, the court occupied itself with the distinctions between the maturity levels of sixteen-, seventeen-, and eighteen-year-olds, admitting that eighteen-year-olds possess greater levels of maturity.\textsuperscript{171} The court then failed to specifically deal with the fact that the student in this case was eighteen and thus presumably possessed the heightened maturity. If it is true that the maturity level of an eighteen-year-old is generally adequate for voluntary sexual decision-making as to consent or its refusal – and even the Supreme Court has decided a series of cases in recent years recognizing the distinctions between eighteen-year-olds and those below age eighteen for purposes of criminal investigation and punishment\textsuperscript{172} – then it is worth asking whether the statute is rationally related to the state’s interest in preventing exploitation

\textsuperscript{171} Edwards, 288 P.3d at 502-03.

\textsuperscript{172} See, e.g., Roper v. Simmons, 543 U.S. 551 (2005) (holding that Eighth Amendment bars capital punishment upon offender who was younger than eighteen at the time of the offense); Graham v. Florida, 130 U.S. 2011 (2010) (holding same as to imposition of life without parole for non-homicide offense); Miller v. Alabama, 132 S. Ct. 2455 (2012) (holding that Eighth Amendment bars mandatory life without parole for homicide offenders under age eighteen); J.D.B. v. North Carolina, 131 U.S. 2394 (2011) (holding that fact that criminal suspect is under age eighteen is relevant to determination of whether the suspect was in custody for Miranda purposes).
when the student is at least eighteen. But another problem for the *Edwards* court is this: if Kansas public policy had meant for the sexual maturity of sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds to be so easily distinguishable from that of eighteen-year-olds, and to matter when applying the unlawful sexual relations statute, then Kansas law could have accounted for this fact. But it did not, as Kansas makes sixteen the age of consent for voluntary sex, reflecting a legislative determination that sixteen- and seventeen-year olds possess – as a matter of law, rather than fact – sufficient capacity for voluntary and intelligent sexual decision-making (including, presumably, the capacity to give or refuse consent). Yet the court goes on to say that the age of the student is less important that the mere fact of the teacher-student relationship, meaning, presumably, that the relationship is one involving an inherently coercive power disparity.

Moreover, particularly in the context of the Washington statute challenged in *Clinkenbeard*, the State’s asserted interest in protecting students from exploitation by those with access to them in an educational environment seems difficult to reconcile with the language of the Washington legislation. If it is the mere fact of the student’s status *as a student* (rather than as a minor) and the employee’s status *as a school employee* (rather than as an intentional coencer or exploiter) that implicates the relevant interest, then that same interest would be implicated if a twenty-three-year-old school employee had consensual sex with a nineteen-year-old student. Yet the State does not punish the employee in that situation. At a minimum, Clinkenbeard could

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173 See KAN. STAT. ANN. 21-3522.

174 Edwards, 288 P.3d at 503.

175 See RCW 9A.44.093(1)(b).
have raised this problem in asserting his equal protection challenge to the statute by claiming that the age provisions were not rationally related to the state’s asserted interest.\(^{176}\)

The recent case of *Paschal v. State*,\(^{177}\) however, demonstrates these concerns about the significance of the fact of private consensual adult sex, and casts some doubt on the soundness of the cases that have refused to recognize a *Lawrence* violation.

*Paschal* was a high school teacher in Arkansas who had been dating an eighteen-year-old student for several months.\(^{178}\) The relationship included sex.\(^{179}\) *Paschal*’s actions (and he knew this, because he expressed concern to the school principal that his career and relationship with his children might be in jeopardy)\(^{180}\) constituted second-degree sexual assault, which occurs when a teacher at a public school engages in sexual contact with a student who is enrolled at the teacher’s school and is under the age of twenty-one.\(^{181}\) The Arkansas Supreme Court held the statute unconstitutional as applied to *Paschal*.\(^{182}\) The State improperly framed the issue as one asking whether a teacher has a fundamental right to have sex with a student enrolled at his school.\(^{183}\) Instead, framing the issue at a broader level of generality, the court said the relevant

\(^{176}\) Note that a subsequent equal protection challenge to the statute was rejected by the Washington Supreme Court, where the defendant claimed that the statute impermissibly discriminated between certain school employees. *See* State v. Hirschfelder, 242 P.3d 876 (Wash. 2010).

\(^{177}\) ___ S.W.3d ___, 2012 Ark. 127 (2012).

\(^{178}\) *Id.* at 3-4.

\(^{179}\) *Id.* at 3.

\(^{180}\) *Id.*

\(^{181}\) *Ark. Code* § 5-14-125(a)(6).

\(^{182}\) *Paschal*, 2012 Ark. at 15.

\(^{183}\) *Id.* at 10-11.
question was whether the statute invaded the personal and *fundamental* right of an adult to engage in consensual, non-prostitution, and private sexual conduct with another adult.184

In holding that such a right existed in Arkansas, the court explained that this was not a case in which the teacher had intentionally exploited the teacher-student relationship so as to create a mere conduit for sexual gratification of the teacher.185 By all indications, Paschal and the student were in a committed relationship that involved more than simply casual sex. The court was careful to distinguish its earlier decision in *Talbert v. State*, in which the court upheld the State’s statute making it third-degree sexual assault for a clergyman to have sex with a penitent.186 That statute requires that the member of the clergy be in a position of trust or authority over the victim *and use the position* to engage in the sexual activity.187 Because *Talbert* involved coercive conduct and *Paschal* did not, the Court found that *Talbert* did not control.188 Moreover, applying strict scrutiny, the court concluded that even if the state has an interest in protecting school students from the sexual advances of teachers (which it does, the court said),189 the statute did not apply the least restrictive means for advancing that interest.190 Rather, if a teacher (like the clergyman in *Talbert*) used his position of trust or authority over a student in order to create a conduit for sexual gratification, the teacher was punishable under the

184 *Id.*

185 *Id.* at 11.


187 See ARK. CODE § 5-14-126(a)(1)(B).

188 *Paschal*, 2012 Ark. at 10.

189 *Id.* at 13.

190 *Id.* at 13-14.
state law forbidding mandated reporters in positions of trust or authority from using the position to engage in sex.\textsuperscript{191}

Still, it is unclear how much the court relied upon \textit{Lawrence}. The better reading of \textit{Paschal} is that the statute was unconstitutional because Arkansas law recognizes such a fundamental right. Although the Court cited \textit{Lawrence}, its statement that \textquote{\textcurlyquote{\textquote{The fundamental right to privacy implicit in our law protects all private, consensual, non-prostitution acts of sexual intimacy,\textquoteright\textquoteright}}\textsuperscript{192} was drawn from language used in \textit{Jegley v. Picado}, an Arkansas case decided a year \textit{before Lawrence}.\textsuperscript{193} That case appears to rest on state constitutional law grounds, rather than a federal one.\textsuperscript{194} Still, Paschal explicitly relied on \textit{Lawrence} and federal substantive due process doctrine to support his claim,\textsuperscript{195} and the dissenting justices seemed to acknowledge that the majority agreed with Paschal’s \textit{Lawrence} claim.\textsuperscript{196} But the majority opinion nevertheless criticized one of the dissents in a footnote, wondering why that dissent relied upon cases from other jurisdictions \textquote{to determine whether [the Arkansas statute at issue] violates the fundamental right to privacy found in the Arkansas Constitution.}\textsuperscript{197}

Perhaps what \textit{Paschal} best represents, then, is the reality that some judges are prepared to recognize that a \textit{Lawrence}-type right extends far enough to permit consensual sexual encounters

\textsuperscript{191} \textit{Id.} at 14 (citing \textsc{Ark. Code} \textsection{} 5-14-126(a)(1)(C)).

\textsuperscript{192} \textit{Id.} at 11 (quoting \textit{Jegley v. Picado}, 80 S.W.3d 332, 350 (Ark. 2002)). Note that \textit{Edwards} was decided after \textit{Paschal}, and refuses to follow \textit{Paschal’s} holding. \textit{See Edwards}, 288 P.3d at 503. Among the reasons, the \textit{Edwards} court said, was that \textit{Paschal} found a fundamental right in the Arkansas Constitution, and that Kansas had not recognized a corresponding state constitutional right. \textit{Id.}

\textsuperscript{193} \textit{See Jegley}, 80 S.W.3d at 332.

\textsuperscript{194} \textit{Id.} at 350.

\textsuperscript{195} \textit{Paschal}, 2012 Ark. at 9.

\textsuperscript{196} \textit{Id.} at 24 (Baker, J., dissenting).

\textsuperscript{197} \textit{Id.} at 12 n.7 (emphasis added).
between a teacher or other school employee and an adult student, at least where the encounter does not involve coercion or any intent to exploit a position of authority over the student. Thus if *Paschal’s* reasoning is correct, we cannot simply assume exploitation from the mere fact of the teacher-student relationship. The state would bear the burden of proving beyond a reasonable doubt not simply that a teacher and adult student had sex, but that the teacher sought to use the position of authority as a way of merely obtaining sex. In the typical case, and in the absence of objective evidence showing threats, coercion, or an intent to exploit the power disparity in the relationship, this will be a difficult burden to meet. Still, though, the dominant approach has been to read *Lawrence* in a judicially conservative manner and to offer wide deference to legislatures in asserting potential harms and risks that would affect not just the student but the system of public education more generally.

**B. Lawrence and Teacher-Student Sex Crimes**

As with the sex by fraud crimes, there are natural reasons to think that *Lawrence’s* Exclusions Paragraph would cover the teacher-student sex cases and validate the existing criminal sanctions. After all, *Lawrence* states that the right would not apply where the sexual conduct would do damage to an institution that the state may protect or where the sex occurs under circumstances in which consent might not easily be refused.\(^{198}\) And the overwhelming number of cases that have denied protection to the teacher pursuant to *Lawrence* – even *Paschal*, where the teacher *was* constitutionally protected – have amply explained the relevant state interests: protecting students from sexual exploitation, protecting the integrity of the academic environment, and preserving a school system free of the complications created by sexual

\(^{198}\) See *Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 578.
relationships between employees and students. But even if protecting students from sexual exploitation demands the coercive force of the criminal law, other interests, while worthy of protection, could be served by administrative or civil remedies short of criminalization – license revocation, for example; or termination, reprimand or suspension from the school.

So if evidence existed that the teacher actually employed his position of power or authority in order to obtain the sex, this would surely fall outside of Lawrence’s protection, even if the criminal statute at issue did not specifically make this an element of the crime. But the central question is whether the “power disparity” or the mere status as a teacher or other authority figure in a particular school necessarily implies undue influence over a student, or precludes the student from making sexual choices knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily. On one level, this power disparity claim might seem difficult to limit. After all, many sexual relationships involving power disparities are not (understandably) criminalized: a CEO who has sex with her administrative assistant, an elected official who has sex with her intern, a wealthy man who has sex with a poor woman. Of course, the state may pick and choose the power disparities it wishes to target, but if the state is serious about the power disparity as the reason why sex inside such a relationship is inherently coercive or exploitative, then the failure to criminalize sex occurring in other types of relationships with power disparities could weaken the state’s claim for rationality. Another problem with the power-disparity-as-inherent-coercion claim is that it fails to account for the realities of a given relationship. For example, the teacher who says to student X, “I will fail you and prevent your graduation from this school if you do not have sex with me,” would be situated no differently – for Lawrence purposes – than the teacher

199 See, e.g., Edwards, 288 P.3d at 502-03.
who says to student X, “If you sleep with me, I will give you an ‘A’ in my course.” The latter scenario might be construed as an offer rather than a threat, but in each case, the teacher is using his or her position as a teacher to extract sex from the student. And in each case, it can fairly be said that the student could not easily refuse consent. These are precisely the kinds of coercive tactics that would serve as evidence that a faculty member is exploiting a power disparity, or status as a teacher or school official, in order to obtain sex with the student. This seems far different, however, from a scenario in which a teacher and an adult student develop genuinely close and romantic feelings for one another, get to know one another, and subsequently have sexual relations; this situation is especially different if the teacher has no direct authority over the student. Lawrence’s Exclusions Paragraph, applied in the adult teacher-adult student sex context, certainly would validate a state interest in preventing sexual exploitation. But when we consider some cases, like Paschal, or even Edwards, this element of exploitation seems lacking.

Nor do the arguments about exploitation – protecting students from power disparities or, in Lawrence’s language, from situations where they might not easily be able to refuse consent – seem to apply with the same force where the adult student seeks out the teacher for sex. Consider, again, the Colleps prosecution. There, at least one of the students involved with Colleps testified that once he found out that Colleps had sex with one of his friends, he urged the friend to “hook [him] up” with Colleps. This hardly seems exploitative on the part of Colleps, unless, again, we are prepared to say that the mere fact that she is a teacher makes the situation

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200 The Dressler text uses this hypothetical, and I use it when I teach the material. See JOSHUA DRESSLER, CASES AND MATERIALS ON CRIMINAL LAW 469 (5th ed. 2010). For an example of the latter scenario, see State v. Thompson, 792 P.2d 1103 (Mont. 1990) (principal not guilty of intercourse without consent under state law).

exploitative. Moreover, none of the students in the Colleps case testified that they felt threatened, or harmed, or exploited, nor did any of the students have a desire to see Colleps punished. Indeed, it is important to remember that once the student reaches the legal age of consent to have sex, the student enjoys important privacy rights related to his or her own sexuality. The state is now implicitly granting the person sexual freedom that did not exist in the same ways before the person became an adult. So the adult student’s own sexual autonomy—not simply the teacher’s—is implicated by the teacher-student sex prohibitions. To equate all sex between adult teachers and adult students, or to argue that all such situations are equally exploitative, is to oversimplify (even misapprehend) the complicated nature of sexual and romantic relationships generally. Such an equation also, in some cases at least, diminishes the sexual autonomy of the adult student, whom the state has now otherwise empowered to make his or her own sexual choices (and, as a consequence, to live with the kinds mistakes with which other adults must live when making sexual choices). Of course, it is once again worth noting that this argument obtains only in situations where exploitation is presumed merely by the nature of the relationship, but is not otherwise actually present or intended on the part of the authoritative actor. In cases involving actual exploitation, or where the teacher acted with an intent to exploit or to otherwise take advantage of his or her position of authority, the state’s

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203 Indeed, presumably, this is a corollary of Lawrence. See Lawrence, 539 U.S. at 572.
interests in criminalizing the conduct clearly become stronger, and Lawrence likely offers no protection in the first place.\footnote{204}

The body of literature addressing sexual relationships between faculty and students at the college and university level is especially instructive. As one might imagine, much of that literature contends that policies (not criminal laws, however) forbidding such relationships are both necessary and desirable, in part because of the risks associated with the practice and in part because of many of the same reasons that we see articulated in the cases concerning such relationships at the secondary school level.\footnote{205} One of the chief arguments is that such relationships are inherently coercive, which would place them outside of Lawrence’s narrow zone of protection.\footnote{206} But other scholars have argued against the validity of general bans on faculty-student sex,\footnote{207} and Paul Secunda has offered a comprehensive, post-Lawrence response to the arguments in favor of prohibitive policies.\footnote{208} Beginning with the premise that Lawrence

\footnote{204} Lawrence, of course, does not explicitly use this terminology, but I interpret Lawrence’s reference to coercion and to injury, see Lawrence, 539 U.S. at 578, as categorically excluding sexual exploitation of this kind.

\footnote{205} See Neal Hutchens, The Legal Effect of College and University Policies Prohibiting Romantic Relationships Between Students and Professors, 32 J.L. & EDUC. 411 (2003); Richard R. Carlson, Romantic Relationships Between Professors and Their Students: Morality, Ethics and Law, 42 S. TEX. L. REV. 493 (2001); Caroline Forell, What’s Wrong with Faculty-Student Sex? The Law School Context, 47 J. LEGAL EDUC. 47 (1997); Margaret H. Mack, Regulating Sexual Relationships Between Faculty and Students, 6 MICH. J. GENDER & L. 79, 94-97 (1999); Martha Chamallas, Consent, Equality, and Legal Control of Sexual Conduct, 61 S. CAL. L. REV. 777 (1988). But cf. Sunstein, supra note __, at 1064 (questioning whether such policies are constitutional after Lawrence, where the parties agree that the relationship is consensual).

\footnote{206} See Mack, supra note __, at 92-95.

\footnote{207} See JANE GALLOP, FEMINIST ACCUSED OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT (1997); Gary E. Elliott, Consensual Relationships and the Constitution: A Case of Liberty Denied, 6 MICH. J. GENDER & L. 47 (1999); Sherry Young, Getting to Yes: The Case Against Banning Consensual Relationships in Higher Education, 4 AM. U.J. GENDER & L. 269 (1996); Secunda, supra note __, at 156-62. See also Sunstein, supra note __, at 1064 (arguing that, on an as-applied-challenge where the parties both claim the relationship is consensual, “these cases would be genuinely difficult after Lawrence”).

advances a sexual autonomy rationale beyond one limited to homosexual sodomy, Secunda (like others) sees a Millian devotion to autonomy that would protect faculty-student sexual relationships. He responds to the “consent might not easily be refused” argument for such policies by concluding that faculty-student sexual relationships can be truly consensual, just as private homosexual relations can be. He further responds to the argument about power disparities by concluding that, although colleges and universities can look to individual instances to determine whether the faculty member exploited the power differential, a blanket prohibition assumes such exploitation and denies the parties an opportunity for “mutually satisfying” relationships. Secunda further argues that colleges and universities are not meant to come within the meaning of Justice Kennedy’s statement about preventing “abuse of an institution the law protects;” rather, that phrase is likely referring to marriage. Secunda ultimately prefers a sliding scale approach to college and university policies, in which the most weight would be given to policies that forbid sexual relationships where there is a supervisory role for the faculty member. This would place the burden on the faculty member to show that her interests in the relationship outweigh the state’s interests. At the same time, the Constitution would presumptively favor non-supervisory relationships.

209 Secunda, supra note __, at 118-19.
210 Id. at 147.
211 Id. at 147-48.
212 Id. at 148-50.
213 Id. at 149.
214 Id. at 156-57.
215 Id. at 157-60.
216 Id. at 160-62.
Secunda is, of course, focused on internal college and university policies that ultimately provide civil or administrative sanctions, rather than criminal laws targeting secondary school teachers who could serve time in prison for engaging in consensual sexual relationships with students. But the arguments he makes seem to apply with much the same force in each context. Perhaps, though, as the Edwards court explained, secondary schools are different.\(^{217}\) Perhaps the state could argue, or rationally conclude, that good academic order and academic integrity have special meaning in the secondary school context, particularly where student assessment is typically not anonymous (as it is in some higher education environments, like law schools). Or perhaps the state could rationally conclude that because secondary school students are overwhelmingly below or have barely reached the age of majority, they are more impressionable, more likely to be adversely affected by an environment in which teacher-student sex is permitted, and perhaps even more likely to be sexually exploited if a sexually permissive atmosphere is allowed to exist between teachers and students.\(^{218}\) Or perhaps the state could argue that, although an atmosphere of sexual freedom and permissiveness is to be expected to some extent once one reaches college, such expectations do not obtain (at least not to the same degree) among secondary schools. The point is simply that if Secunda’s thoughtful arguments are ultimately persuasive in the context in which he raises them – that is, if he is right about Lawrence’s meaning and reach with respect to consensual sexual relationships in higher education – then the criminal laws described here would have to be predicated upon interests unique to the secondary school context.

\(^{217}\) See Edwards, 288 P.2d at 504.

\(^{218}\) See Edwards, 288 P.3d at 504.
C. Lawrence and the Importance of an Intimate Relationship

It is also important to give attention to the language in *Lawrence*, which has not escaped thoughtful scholarly attention,\(^{219}\) that the right is (or might be) predicated upon the existence of an intimate relationship or upon conduct designed to promote emotional intimacy between people. *Lawrence* specifically describes the sodomy at issue in that case as “but one element in a personal bond that is more enduring.”\(^{220}\) As other scholars have noted, this language suggests that sexuality is worth preserving as a constitutional value only when it forms a part of the development and preservation of intimate relationships that the actors hope will endure.\(^{221}\) In this sense, and in light of the Exclusions Paragraph, there is further evidence that while *Lawrence* may not look at first blush as traditionally conservative with respect to law and sexuality, neither is *Lawrence* particularly libertarian. As such, *Lawrence* would forbid even consensual sex obtained by deception or seduction, because in such cases the sexual intimacy is consummated not for the purpose of developing a deeper emotionally intimate relationship but merely to serve the prurient interests of the seducer, who is engaging in fraud or misrepresentation solely to obtain sex rather than to promote intimacy within a committed relationship. But in the adult teacher-adult student cases, it would also require us to treat different teachers differently in the cases discussed here. It would, for example, treat David Paschal – who dated his student lover prior to their sexual activity and by all indications developed a serious relationship with her over time – differently from Brittni Colleps, who engaged only in casual sex, including group sex, with multiple student partners.


\(^{220}\) *Lawrence*, 539 U.S. at 567.

\(^{221}\) *See* Rosenbury & Rothman, *supra* note __, at 810.
Yet, if this reading if *Lawrence* is accurate (and it certainly is plausible), then fully, truly consensual “one-night stands” would not be protected under *Lawrence’s* privacy right. Casual sex of all kinds, including group sex (consider, again, Colleps’s case), would be unprotected even if consensual. This seems a strange result if *Lawrence* is otherwise serious about the way it describes the importance of sexual autonomy. More broadly, Laura Rosenbury and Jennifer Rothman have written an exceptionally thoughtful piece that acknowledges *Lawrence’s* conservative approach to sex and challenges this type of constraint on *Lawrence’s* privacy right, arguing that sex can have value even in non-intimate or enduring relationships.222 The authors describe the existing “sex-negative landscape” as discouraging sex outside of emotionally intimate relationships and as deterring “openness about the potential diversity of sexual experiences.”223 As a result, sexual expression is considered acceptable only in narrow circumstances and any sex that falls outside of those narrow categories is stigmatized.224 According to their formulation, sexual association and intimate association must not be conflated.225 If the Rosenbury/Rothman formulation is the better reading of *Lawrence*, or if some subsequent case adopts this formulation, then clearly the possibility of a seducer claiming a constitutional bar to his prosecution becomes somewhat more palatable, but again, only to the extent that the seductive activity is not also fraudulent or otherwise exploitative. The same is true with the teacher who has consensual casual or group sex with adult students, outside the context of a committed relationship. And yet, if the *Lawrence* right really does depend upon the

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222 *Id.* at 811.
223 *Id.*
224 *Id.* at 812.
225 *Id.* at 818-19.
existence of an intimate relationship, then those persons situated in otherwise prohibited sexual relationships would arguably possess a stronger case for protection under Lawrence where the sex was a part of a deeper and more lasting relationship (which is to say, it involves more than merely casual sex). In the case of teacher-student sex, the argument for deliberate exploitation at least seems stronger if the sex is isolated and casual, unconnected to a deeper commitment between the two parties. By contrast, exploitation appears less likely as an explanation for the teacher’s conduct if objective evidence of such relational commitment exists.

Making these kinds of distinctions, of course, simply reinforces the argument that Rosenbury and Rothman advance: valuing consensual sexual intimacy between adults means recognizing its value outside of committed relationships, and this means moving to a vision of sexual intimacy that more fully considers sex in the context of freedom, self-fulfillment, self-realization. Yet it is those very distinctions that could indicate the difference between a teacher-student sexual relationship that actually implicates state concerns about sexual exploitation, and one that does not.

IV. RETHINKING SEX CRIMES AFTER LAWRENCE

The two areas of sex crimes discussed here may seem somewhat detached on the surface. The sex by fraud materials focus primarily on the issue of whether consent can be said to exist; that is, whether the deception or misrepresentation vitiates consent. In the teacher-student materials, the cases presume consent and instead focus upon the state’s interests in forbidding

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226 See id. at 819-21 (citing with approval, inter alia, J. Harvie Wilkinson III & G. Edward White, Constitutional Protection for Personal Lifestyles, 62 CORNELL L. REV. 563 (1977) and David A.J. Richards, Sexual Autonomy and the Constitutional Right to Privacy: A Case Study in Human Rights and the Unwritten Constitution, 30 HASTINGS L.J. 957 (1979)).
sex based solely upon identities and roles of the sexual partners. Yet both areas raise the problem of actual or potential sexual exploitation. Moreover, both areas raise the same potential constitutional problem: whether, if the sex at issue is private, non-prostitution, truly consensual, and between adults, the state may choose to nonetheless make the sex a crime without violating due process. And yet, at a deeper level of criminal lawmakers, both areas compel us to confront the question of what types, and degrees, of harm are sufficient to implicate the interests and functions of the criminal sanction: whether the conduct at issue is sufficiently worthy of condemnation and punishment imposed by the political community. The politics of crime-definition and the exercise of prosecutorial discretion become especially valuable components of the criminal law narrative that *Lawrence* sets in motion.

Consequently, perhaps the better understanding of *Lawrence*, from the perspective of criminal law, is not one that focuses upon the fundamentality of the right, the standard of review, or even the nature of constitutional protection for sexuality, important as those considerations are. Rather, perhaps *Lawrence* is better understood as a case that compels us to consider more carefully which consensual sexual conduct we decide to punish. Strader’s analysis of *Lawrence* rightly highlights not only *Lawrence*’s significance as a criminal law precedent but also *Lawrence*’s interest in harm.\(^{227}\) As the state’s justification is more closely scrutinized, naturally, the burden is greater on the state to identify the substantiality of the harm that it seeks to prevent and punish. But even at the level of rational basis review, the harm that the state identifies must be more than an abstract harm to public morality. Homosexual sodomy *simpliciter*, then, cannot be criminalized because it works no harm to individuals and no social harm that the state is otherwise entitled to address through the criminal sanction. Indeed, the categories of sexual

\(^{227}\) See Strader, *supra* note __, at 51-61. On this aspect of *Lawrence*, then, Strader and I seem to agree.
conduct that fit within the Exclusions Paragraph all include sexual conduct that could be deemed sufficiently harmful to the political community, beyond harms that may be characterized as moral ones only. But those categories of conduct, and the ones discussed in this Article, challenge us to properly identify the scope of any harm principle announced in Lawrence – whether, as Strader argues, that harm must be proven to exist in each case, or whether the state is free to identify potential harms or risks of exploitation even if not actually present. Understood this way, then, Lawrence emerges as an instrument for propelling a larger narrative about the overcriminalization, or at least the overprosecution, of sex.

Maybe this is the real virtue of Lawrence. Even if Lawrence is read to apply only rational basis review, thus setting a low bar of justification for most sex crimes (and thus likely validating the overwhelming majority of sex-by-deception crimes \textit{and} those involving prohibited sexual relationships beyond mere homosexual ones), and even if Lawrence’s constitutional holding only reinforces restraints on – rather than the liberation of – sex,\textsuperscript{228} it nonetheless forces us to grapple politically with whether we simply make crimes out of, and prosecute, too many consensual sex acts. Lawrence’s concerns, then, tend to merge with those of the criminal law.

The literature on overcriminalization in America is substantial,\textsuperscript{229} but it is not clear that sex crimes have played a significant role in the debate (beyond the subject of prostitution).\textsuperscript{230} Perhaps this is a product of our inability to achieve greater sexual liberation, leaving us mired in

\textsuperscript{228} See Rosenbury & Rothman, \textit{supra} note __, at ____.


a kind of sexual conservatism that regards much sexual activity as socially unacceptable or morally questionable – even if private and consensual, particularly outside of marriage. Or perhaps it is because, like other areas of criminalization, legislators can afford to broaden criminal prohibitions without fear of a political downside and because no constituency for decriminalization exists that is politically worthy of defending.\textsuperscript{231} In the context of private, non-prostitution, and consensual sex, however, this explanation for criminalization does not seem to apply – unlike other forms of criminal activity, private, non-prostitution and consensual sex outside of marriage is common enough that every American legislator has a relevant constituency engaging in this behavior. Moreover, the “tough on crime” label that normally drives the politics of crime-definition seems difficult to apply when one is talking about consensual sex between adults. Still, perhaps those crimes actually involve an interest worth punishing through the criminal sanction. As Falk notes, for example, one of the emerging themes in the sex by fraud cases is that the perpetrators tend to commit their frauds upon multiple victims, thus raising legitimate state concerns about sexual predation as well as exploitation.\textsuperscript{232} And as we see in the student-teacher cases, if the state must seek an external harm to justify what is otherwise fully and truly consensual sex, the externality is the educational institution or system itself and the learning environment and good order that it must promote to be effective at the critical but complicated task of educating young people. The larger criminal law-making point here, then, is that criminal law could actually be drawn to reflect these legitimate state interests by including the relevant harm as an element of the crime, thus allowing

\textsuperscript{231} See Broughton, supra note __, at 471. I am influenced by Bill Stuntz’s work on the politics of criminalization, and he makes a similar point with great persuasiveness. See William J. Stuntz, The Pathological Politics of Criminal Law, 100 Mich. L. Rev. 505, 509 (2001).

\textsuperscript{232} See Falk, supra note __, at 50-51.
us to meaningfully distinguish the most harmful sex from sex that, even if undesirable, is unworthy of social condemnation and public punishment through criminal sanction.\textsuperscript{233}

Indeed, at a time when the substantive criminal law has grown by alarming proportions, and has invested prosecutors with enormous power,\textsuperscript{234} the moment is ripe for more fully considering how the substantive criminal law of sex is contributing to the rightful scope and power of the state. In such massive – and massively powerful – criminal law and prosecutorial regimes, it is a mistake to unthinkingly perpetuate a regime of criminalized consensual, private, adult sex without adequately considering whether public resources ought to be devoted to prosecuting such cases and to subjecting offenders to public punishment in the absence of actual harms, particularly where civil and administrative remedies might be available and more desirable. So even if the state can identify non-moral interests that would survive constitutional scrutiny, it is fair to ask whether those are interests that the state can protect without using the blunt force of the criminal law and criminal prosecution. To say that Paschal, Collep, Edwards, or Morales have done something to compromise the educational environment – and that they should be disciplined – is one thing. To put expend scarce public resources on their prosecutions and imprison them is quite another. To say that psychopherapists cannot have sex with their patients is one thing; to say they cannot do so even after termination of the professional relationship is quite another; to prosecute and put them in jail for it is still another.\textsuperscript{235}

\textsuperscript{233} I understand Strader to make a similar, but slightly different, point in the context of judging the constitutionality of sex crime statutes. For Strader, if the text of the statute fails to clearly identify the relevant harm being targeted, then the government must affirmatively prove that the act caused specific harm to person or property (but not “harm to society”). See Strader, \textit{supra} note __, at 74-76. A mere assertion of an abstract harm will not do.


So regardless of whether *Lawrence* reaches as far as this Article has (rather skeptically) suggested that it might, American policymakers cannot simply rely on an ambivalent Supreme Court to determine the scope of permissible consensual adult sexuality. Consequently, we ought to understand *Lawrence* as a case that challenges existing political assumptions about the criminal law of sex. It compels us to bring crimes involving truly consensual, private adult sex to the table as we further the conversation about the proper scope of the American criminal sanction and exercise of prosecutorial power and discretion. Even if we assume that *Lawrence* is more conservative than libertarian, and even if one wishes that *Lawrence* was more clear about the scope of its protection for protect consensual, non-prostitution, and private adult sex, a conservative grounding for a leaner and more sensible criminal law of sex remains possible. The result (though not the methodology) in *Lawrence* is not inconsistent with a thoughtful form of conservatism that embraces prudent limits on the criminal sanction and the power of the state. While conservatism embraces restraints sexual practices that inflict identifiable social harms, it does not require *criminal* punishments for any and all conduct that may be socially undesirable. The criminal law is a vital, but not exclusive, instrument for achieving a tolerable social order.

For the thoughtful conservative – who may be skeptical of this assessment of *Lawrence*’s virtue – Justice Thomas’s two-paragraph dissent in *Lawrence* is worth careful consideration. When Justice Thomas channels Justice Stewart in *Griswold*, calling this an “‘uncommonly silly law’” and saying that he would vote to repeal the Texas sodomy statute if he were a member of the Texas legislature, Justice Thomas is demonstrating a substantive criminal law vision not

\footnote{\textsuperscript{236} Cf. Carpenter, \textit{supra} note \_\_, at \_\_.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{237} See \textit{Griswold v. Connecticut}, 381 U.S. 479, 527 (Stewart, J., dissenting).}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{238} See \textit{Lawrence}, 539 U.S. at 605 (Thomas, J., dissenting).}
so attenuated from that of the *Lawrence* majority, even if his constitutional analysis differs significantly. 239 “Punishing someone for expressing his sexual preference through non-prostitution consensual conduct with another adult,” Thomas says, “does not appear to be a worthy way to expend valuable law enforcement resources.” 240 The prudent political decisionmaker knows that she must pick her battles, wisely, with serious consideration given to the proper equilibrium between good social order and freedom, to reasonable limits on the power of the state, and to an appreciation of social custom and tradition as well as a recognition that those customs and traditions evolve. In this sense, the overcriminalization concern and the aims of conservatism are entirely compatible. So, too, then, are conservatism and the vision of the criminal law of sex that *Lawrence* tries (imperfectly) to describe.

V. CONCLUSION

For ten years, the criminal law has endured the ambiguities of *Lawrence*. Those ambiguities create especially complicated constitutional questions about criminal sexual behavior in factually consensual sexual encounters. It is important to emphasize again that this Article does not condone, endorse, or justify any of the sexual activity or conduct at issue in the cases or hypotheticals discussed here. What this Article has attempted to do, however, is to identify a framework for considering the enticingly rich but deeply unclear holding in *Lawrence* and to discern whether *Lawrence* offers some admittedly narrow protection for truly factually consensual (that is, consensual as to the nature of the act), non-prostitution sexual encounters between adults that the state nevertheless forbids through the criminal law. The existing understanding of *Lawrence* among lower courts, if accurate, suggests that *Lawrence* is a

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239 *See id.* at 605-06 (Thomas, J., dissenting).

240 *Id.* at 605. (Thomas, J., dissenting).
comparatively conservative opinion that likely offers little in the way of restraints on the state’s ability to regulate sex. That may well be an accurate interpretation of Lawrence, but it is no substitute for clarity. In truth, the loose language in Lawrence has real implications for the criminal law of sex in America and for the sexual behavior of consenting adults. The Court should rectify this shortcoming. But even if it does not, Lawrence has provided American criminal justice policymakers and prosecutors with an opportunity to engage the broader problem of overcriminalization in the area of sexuality and to target only that sexual conduct which is sufficiently personally or socially harmful to justify the coercive power of the criminal sanction. When it comes to truly consensual sex between adults, there are good reasons to believe, the universe of conduct that should be criminalized and prosecuted is a small one.