

5-2009

## Quest for Quotidian: A National Survey of Non-Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Marriage

Troy A. McGinnis  
*University of Nevada, Las Vegas*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations>



Part of the [Community-Based Research Commons](#), [Gender and Sexuality Commons](#), and the [Philosophy Commons](#)

---

### Repository Citation

McGinnis, Troy A., "Quest for Quotidian: A National Survey of Non-Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Marriage" (2009). *UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones*. 1201.  
<https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/1201>

This Dissertation is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by Digital Scholarship@UNLV with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Dissertation in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Dissertation has been accepted for inclusion in UNLV Theses, Dissertations, Professional Papers, and Capstones by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship@UNLV. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@unlv.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@unlv.edu).

QUEST FOR QUOTIDIAN: A NATIONAL  
SURVEY OF NON-HETEROSEXUAL  
ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE

by

Troy A. McGinnis

Bachelor of Arts  
The University of Texas at Austin  
1995

Master of Arts  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
1999

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the

**Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Sociology**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**College of Liberal Arts**

**Graduate College**  
**University of Nevada, Las Vegas**  
**May 2009**

UMI Number: 3384004

Copyright 2009 by  
McGinnis, Troy A.

#### INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI<sup>®</sup>

---

UMI Microform 3384004  
Copyright 2009 by ProQuest LLC  
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against  
unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

---

ProQuest LLC  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Copyright 2009 by Troy A. McGinnis  
All Rights Reserved



Dissertation Approval  
The Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

April 14, 2009

The Dissertation prepared by

Troy A. McGinnis

Entitled

QUEST FOR QUOTIDIAN: A NATIONAL SURVEY OF NON-HETEROSEXUAL ATTITUDES  
TOWARD MARRIAGE

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

[Redacted Signature]

*Examination Committee Chair*

[Redacted Signature]

*Dean of the Graduate College*

[Redacted Signature]

*Examination Committee Member*

[Redacted Signature]

*Examination Committee Member*

[Redacted Signature]

*Graduate College Faculty Representative*

[Redacted Signature]

*Examination Committee Member*

## ABSTRACT

### **Quest for Quotidian: A National Survey of Non-Heterosexual Attitudes Toward Marriage**

by

Troy A. McGinnis

Dr. Andrea Fontana, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of Sociology  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Marriage equality remains a legal impossibility for same-sex couples in most states, and opponents are concerned that expansion of marriage to include gays and lesbians would radically redefine the institution. Findings from an online survey of lesbians, gays and bisexuals— a non-random sample of 466 adult men and women age 18 to 74 in 37 states— strongly suggest that many non-heterosexuals' attitudes reflect neither a radical departure from core definitions of marriage, nor a rejection of traditional “family values,” but instead signal an assimilationist position favorable to traditional marriage norms rather than a liberationist position critical of the institution.

To explain commitment to assimilation among gays, lesbians and bisexuals, a “Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale” (PMAS) was developed from items currently used in various state surveys that measure values and attitudes indicating support or lack of support for more or less traditional marriage. Sequential regression on the PMAS yielded a model wherein the most powerful predictors of attitudes favorable to marriage were personal religious belief, a commitment to monogamy in practice, an expectation that marriage to a partner would improve quality of life, and a negative view of divorce (adjusted  $R^2=37.5$ ). Neither visibility, community participation, nor queer community integration appeared to influence scores on the PMAS.

Younger, less educated respondents tended to hold stronger pro-marriage attitudes. Assimilationist attitudes are more prevalent among homosexuals and men, while liberationist attitudes are more pronounced among bisexuals and women. Significant differences between bisexuals and individuals who are strictly “homosexual” emerged at all stages of analyses. In regression, “bisexual woman” predicted lower PMAS scores until education and political orientation were controlled in the final model.

Results support the “conservative case” for same-sex marriage, which calls for assimilation of gays and lesbians into the US family system by extending the right to marry to same-sex couples. Findings suggest that assimilationist ideology already drives the movement toward marriage among gays and lesbians, and might be a latent function of the decades-long conservative promotion of traditional familism that idealizes marriage.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
TABLE OF TABLES .....	viii
TABLE OF FIGURES .....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	x
CHAPTER ONE THE QUEST FOR QUOTIDIAN.....	1
The Distance from Queer to There .....	3
Visibility and Family Politics .....	4
A Test of the Conservative Case.....	6
Overview of the Study.....	8
The Quest for Quotidian Online Survey .....	9
Sampling and Recruitment .....	12
Measuring Attitudes Toward Marriage .....	15
Analyses .....	18
The Organization of this Book .....	18
Social Contexts.....	19
Descriptive Data: The Quest for Quotidian Sample .....	19
Assimilation or Liberation? Analysis of Attitudes Toward Marriage.....	20
CHAPTER TWO IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE .....	21
Liberal Gay Politics as Resistance.....	24
Conservative Perspectives on Family Change .....	25
Fear of Assimilation.....	31
Pictures from a Normal Life .....	33
CHAPTER THREE THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE: SODOMY, PRIVACY, AND THE RIGHT TO MARRY .....	37
Privacy Protections for Non-heterosexuals .....	39
Political Backlash Against Expansion of Civil Rights of Gays and Lesbians.....	41
The “Homosexual Agenda”: Panics, Parties and Professional Homophobes.....	42
The Radical Christian Threat: Discrimination or Death, Not Marriage .....	45
Marriage Rights and Family Rights: Federalism and Discrimination.....	47
CHAPTER FOUR PORTRAIT OF A QUEER PEOPLE .....	51
<i>Quest for Quotidian: An American Sample</i> .....	54
Gender: Bodies and Performance .....	57



Gender and Sexuality: Desire, Identity and Behavior .....	60
Coming Out and Coming of Age.....	66
Visibility, Age and the Closet.....	68
Being Out: Perceptions of Openness .....	71
Being Out: Disclosure of Sexual Identity.....	73
Out to Friends and Family .....	75
Out at Work.....	77
Out in the Community.....	78
Patterns of Disclosure.....	78
CHAPTER FIVE LIFE ALONG THE QUOTIDIAN: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY .....	81
Children of Marriage.....	81
Parents' Education .....	82
Growing up Christian—Or not.....	83
Current Religious Beliefs and Practices.....	85
Family Support .....	86
Coupling and Parenting .....	88
Education and Student Status .....	92
Friends and Social Networks .....	93
Community Involvement and Political Participation.....	97
Civic Involvement .....	100
Queer Community Integration .....	101
Politics and Party.....	102
CHAPTER SIX NOT-SO-QUEER ATTITUDES TOWARD MARRIAGE .....	107
The Social Relevance of Marriage .....	112
Marital Permanence and Durability.....	116
Different-Sex Relationships .....	116
Same-Sex Relationships.....	118
Attitude Measures .....	119
Marriage and the Welfare of Children .....	122
Non-Heterosexual Parents in the Sample.....	122
Children Benefit from Marriage .....	124
Decoupling Parenting from Marriage?.....	125
The Centrality of Monogamy to Marriage: Practice and Attitudes.....	126
Monogamy in Practice .....	128
Monogamy Among Lesbians and Gay Men.....	129
Attitudes about Monogamy and Marriage.....	132
Taking Marriage Seriously .....	134
Divorce as a Social Problem.....	136
How Strong is Marriage?.....	138
Elements of the Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale.....	139
Performance and Reliability.....	140
Effects of Sexual Identity on the Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS).....	140
Non-Heterosexuals and the “Normal” Life.....	142

CHAPTER SEVEN	MAPPING THE QUOTIDIAN.....	144
	The Strength of Marriage and Assimilationist Ideology .....	144
	Dependent Variable: Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale (PMAS).....	144
	Influences of Identity .....	145
	Regression Model 1: Analysis and Results.....	146
	Lifestyles and Attitudes Toward Marriage: Community, Religiosity and Monogamy....	149
	Community Integration: Failure and Revelation.....	149
	Strength of Personal Religious Belief .....	154
	Commitment to Monogamy in Relationships .....	157
	The “Tea Room” Revisited: Insights on Monogamy and Tradition.....	160
	Regression Model 2: Analysis and Results.....	165
	State of the Union: Marriage vs Divorce Culture.....	168
	Expectations for Marriage .....	170
	Commitment to Divorce Culture .....	172
	Regression Model 3: Analysis and Results.....	175
	Controls and Biases .....	177
	Queer Social Networks, Christianity, and Politics.....	177
	Social Class: Race, Education and Income.....	180
	Real and Virtual Geography .....	180
	Regression Model 4: Analysis and Results.....	180
CHAPTER EIGHT	TOWARD A RED LETTER DAY.....	184
	Assimilationist Ideology Among Non-Heterosexuals .....	184
	Diversity and Divergence: Bisexuality.....	185
	Lifestyle Choices: Religion and Monogamy.....	189
	Competing Cultures: Marriage and Divorce.....	190
	Queer Assimilation as a Function of Radical Familism .....	193
	Limitations and Directions for Further Research .....	197
	The Future of Marriage .....	200
REFERENCES	.....	202
APPENDIX	QUEST FOR QUOTIDIAN QUESTIONNAIRE AND CODEBOOK.....	<i>on CD-ROM</i>
VITA	.....	219

## TABLE OF TABLES

Table 1.	Age Respondent Came Out as Non-heterosexual (includes estimates) by Current Age of Respondent, N=462 .....	69
Table 2.	Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Openness ( <i>howout</i> ), by Gendered Sexual Identity .....	71
Table 3.	Results of Logistic Regression of Bisexuality and Gender on Disclosure in Fewer than Two Domains (e.g., friends, family, work, or community).....	76
Table 4.	Most Common Configurations of Disclosure of Sexual Identity, ranked by frequency of response, N=466.....	79
Table 5.	Mother's Education by Father's Education as Percentage of Sample (N=450) ...	82
Table 6.	Marital Status by Gendered Sexual Identity, N=466 .....	89
Table 7.	Logistic Regression of Emotional Satisfaction on Optimism in Committed Relationships (n=228), controlling for Sexual Identity, Gender and Age.....	90
Table 8.	Political Beliefs within Party Affiliation Among Non-Heterosexuals .....	104
Table 9.	Means and standard deviations for items measuring attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals .....	109
Table 10.	Means and standard deviations for adapted items measuring attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals.....	111
Table 11.	Logistic Regression of Gay/Lesbian Sexuality on Monogamous Relationship Style .....	130
Table 12.	Correlation Matrix for Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale and Predictors used in Regression Model 1, including Age, Coupled Status and Gendered Sexual Identity .....	147
Table 13.	Model 1—Regression of Identity Markers on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS) .....	148
Table 14.	Relationship Styles Recoded as Commitment to Monogamy .....	163
Table 15.	Model 2—Sequential Regression of Lifestyles and Identity Markers on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS) .....	167
Table 16.	Distributions of Positive Effects of Marriage Items, Percentages .....	171
Table 17.	Model 3—Sequential Regression of Identity Markers, Lifestyles, and Marriage v. Divorce Variables on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS) .....	176
Table 18.	Model 4—Full Sequential Regression on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS).....	182

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Gendered Sexual Identity, or Sexuality by Gender .....61

Figure 2. Distribution of Age in the Sample.....66

Figure 3. Distribution of Years Since Coming Out.....71

Figure 4. Percentages of US Population and Quest for Quotidian respondents age 25 and over (n=354) with high school education, two-year, four-year and advanced degrees .....93

Figure 5. Percentages of US Population and Quest for Quotidian respondents age 18 to 24 (n=110) with high school education, two-year, four-year and advanced degrees .....94

Figure 6. Friendship Networks by Age, and by Gendered Sexual Identity .....96

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In addition to the hundreds of individuals who participated in this study, including those who were part of the pre-test of my online questionnaire, I would like to thank a number of people whose support and assistance have been invaluable to me as I developed, conducted, and now finally present this research.

First, to Andy Fontana and his wife, Tina, I extend my deepest gratitude. In the end, their encouragement and generosity made the completion of this work possible under the most difficult of conditions. Andy, as my advisor, kept bringing me back to the project when I was overwhelmed by it, and when my professional and personal obligations seemed to demand more than I had to give. When I brooded, Tina gently reminded me to cherish what I should—the purpose, the experience, and the people who have guided me along this path. Together, Andy and Tina never let me lose sight of what mattered. The work we do is more honorable than just putting numbers and words on paper—it is work worth doing, and worth sharing with each other and the world. I am forever indebted to them for the elegant dinners, perfect wines, brilliant conversations, stern criticisms, and the strength they lent me in the name of friendship.

In addition to Dr. Fontana, I am indebted to the other members of my advisory committee for their patience and support. Norval Glenn at the University of Texas at Austin has been a fast friend and mentor since the day he told me—on a post-it, I think—that I could make a career in sociology. I appreciate his expertise and even-handed wisdom, his astonishing capacity for patience, and his strength of character. I am very grateful to Ron Smith, who oversaw my MA research; to Fred Preston, who gave me my first opportunity to teach in the college classroom; and to Michael Borer, for getting into the game when I needed him. Thanks to Christopher Heavey, who has represented the Graduate College at

UNLV on both my thesis and dissertation committees. Special thanks goes to Dr. Harriet Barlow of the UNLV Graduate College, and Cindy Lee-Tataseo, liaison to UNLV's Social and Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board.

I spent a long time in Las Vegas, and my experience there was enriched by a number of colleagues at UNLV and the College of Southern Nevada, where I studied and taught from 2000 to 2006: Simon Gottschalk, Robert Futrell, Barb Brents, Bo Bernhard, Pam Gallion and Kevin Rafferty. I deeply appreciate the warm welcome from my colleagues in Texas—Amy Glenn, Gary Coulton, Thomas Brown, Stefanie Greiner, Carolyn Chatham and Tracey Mendoza—all of whom have helped make finishing this project possible.

My family and friends have been a source of phenomenal support. My parents Keith and Martha Barnhill have never wavered in their encouragement. My partner Marc Bray has been a rock, keeping me from going insane when my technology or my resolve failed. Robert Stovall has been there from the beginning, his friendship valuable beyond measure. My dear friend Cheryl Radeloff has provided almost daily emotional support and hours of thoughtful conversation, along with helpful editorial suggestions. Without her, I would have lit out for the territories a long, long time ago. Linda Levitt was charged with long-distance hand-holding when I was having trouble balancing my work with being a dad, and still found time to offer comments and suggestions on the manuscript. The entire experience would have been no fun at all without the presence in my life of an amazing bunch of friends: Kendall Abbott, Jennifer Bermudez, Patrick English, Jeff Garofalo, Bill Heavlin, Erin Hennessy, Kip Holcomb, Harvey Lynch, Sherry McGinnis, Maggy Oppelt, Jeff Otto, Mark Rauls, Pete Simi, Paula Walsh, Linda West, Megan Wiseman and Justin Wynns.

Most of all, I want to thank Kiffin Rhys McGinnis. This work, and everything I have ever done, is dedicated to my son. I could not be more grateful to *and for* him. Kiffin, I would not be who I am without your fearless faith in me, and the steady love, good humor and sense of purpose you have always brought into my life. Now that it is your turn, just remember the Three Keys, and know that your dad always has your back.

## CHAPTER ONE

### THE QUEST FOR QUOTIDIAN

*Because some people have sex with people of the same sex, an entire culture has been created, broadly speaking, out of oppression. Which in a rational world would not be an issue. We hope we are moving toward a world where [sexual orientation] is not an issue, because we hate the idea of a gay ghetto. I think that it's a real shame that people become restricted by their sexuality or define their whole lives by their sexuality.*

—Neil Tennant of the pop duo, Pet Shop Boys,  
interviewed in *The Advocate* (Pope 2001)

In the past several years, the question of whether to expand the definition of civil marriage to include same-sex couples has come to dominate political and cultural debates over discrimination against non-heterosexual people as well as the future of marriage and the family across the United States. Indeed, same-sex marriage appears to be a political and cultural lodestone, drawing gays and lesbians out of invisibility to fight for marriage equality while simultaneously pulling anti-gay activists into the streets in protest and pushing everyday Americans out of their lethargic and uncritical acceptance of marriage as an exclusively heterosexual privilege. At issue is the definition of marriage, insofar as that definition would specify who may marry whom, and whether such a union is deserving of the benefits associated with being married. Unfortunately, same-sex couples in most states are treated as if their inclusion in marriage would radically redefine the institution, although the early 2000s have seen an increased willingness to recognize gay and lesbian relationships. Some believe that gays and lesbians should be satisfied with informal or limited recognition

of their intimate lives and loves—e.g., “living together,” registered domestic partnerships, civil unions, etc.—but even the most generous interpretation of this position falls short of addressing the central issue of equality on which the case for same-sex marriage is built.

Working from a basic definition offered by Wedgwood, marriage as a social institution is essentially a relationship characterized by “(1) sexual intimacy; (2) domestic and economic cooperation; and (3) a voluntary mutual commitment to sustaining” itself (1999:229). Loved ones and strangers alike arguably recognize marriage when they see it—even if they do not particularly approve—because it is “generally *expected* that couples participating in this institution would typically have a relationship of this kind” (Wedgwood 1999:230). Wedgwood argues that for gays and lesbians, marriage already exists if their relationships meet this basic definition, independent of any particular benefit from employers or the state. While social benefits may not be essential to a basic definition of marriage, in Wedgwood’s view, it is not enough for couples who have sex together, live together, share finances, and intend to be together for the foreseeable future to simply *say* they are married and hope everyone accepts their claim. Wedgwood believes in the social power of that “little piece of paper.” Marriage law specifies who is or can be married, lays out the responsibilities and obligations of spouses to one another and to the community, demands public acknowledgement of such relationships, and protects the families such relationships create—all of which fall outside the ability of an individual couple to define on their own in modern societies.

Marriage must confer “*marital status itself*” in order to activate the institution of marriage, its incumbent meanings and good intentions (Wedgwood 1999). Without legally recognized same-sex marriage, lesbian and gay relationships might be marriage-*like* in practice, but will remain inadequate substitutes for socially meaningful *marriage*, the institutionalized web of social bonds that has consistently integrated unrelated individuals, families and groups into stable, just communities. Without equal marital status, there is no marriage equality, and without marriage equality, full integration into the community or society is simply



not possible for lesbians, gays or other non-heterosexuals who might form non-traditional households.

### The Distance from Queer to There

To date, marriage equality is a legal impossibility for same-sex couples in more than four-fifths of the United States that make up 21st-century America, and the struggle for the right to marry remains an uphill battle everywhere. History and experience suggest there is a trajectory in the life course that all of us—straight and gay and otherwise—have been socialized at least to recognize, even if we do not all follow it to the letter. That trajectory is the “normal life,” the cultural narrative that promises to us that sometime while we are going through our education, our careers, our lives, we will at some point meet someone, fall in love, live together, perhaps have children, and share a life. For heterosexuals (and many bisexuals), this narrative is called marriage. For gays and lesbians, it is a politically and historically elusive “red-letter day.”

For all of us, it is what I call the *quotidian*: the “normal” life we imagine for ourselves. Lesbians and gay men in several countries around the globe have been welcomed into the privileged club of the legally married, with little sustained fanfare or negative fallout for the family institution in those societies. Yet, in the United States, non-heterosexuals continue to be demonized for living outside traditional family structures as adults, for not conforming to the rules of compulsory heterosexuality (Rich 1983), for somehow being socially irresponsible or selfish because they are *not straight* and therefore undeserving of the pleasures and comforts of state-sanctioned family life. They are seen by many as perpetually single, even when they have been in long-term relationships for years, relationships that have been rendered invisible by homophobia and discrimination throughout the modern history of the United States. Today, lesbians and gays still face serious obstacles to starting families, regardless of where they live. Gay and lesbian people cannot legally form marriages or legitimate families in most states, which leaves them and their children vulnerable to

stigmatization and legal harassment, or even violence, than other citizens. Alternative paths to parenting are expensive if not illegal for many homosexual couples, although these obstacles are not necessarily faced by cohabiting heterosexual couples who can opt to legally tie the knot.

The explicit exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage and other family-building processes arguably opens members of these families to greater threats of social, political and physical violence based on culturally-embedded prejudice against non-traditional and especially non-heterosexual identities. Despite these problems, the number of gay and lesbian families has been growing more or less steadily since the 1960s, along with other alternative family forms in the United States (Rosenfeld 2007). In these families today, many lesbians and gays already live their intimate lives in ways that mirror learned beliefs, values, and expectations traditionally associated with marriage.

#### *Visibility and Family Politics*

Compared to conditions three and four decades removed, the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century have been marked by dramatic changes in gay culture and in US culture at large. The increased visibility and tolerance of non-heterosexual individuals and couples in US society (Avery et al. 2007; Bernstein 2002; Green 2002; Loftus 2001; Seidman 2001) has precipitated a shift in political and cultural priorities among gays and lesbians for whom *social acceptance* as opposed to *political tolerance* is within reach. This study aims to provide an empirical account of these changes and the observed shift from a broad liberationist political program—which has characterized queer politics in the gay community for decades—toward a more narrow personal and political strategy of assimilation evinced by the struggles in various states over the right to legal marriage. I set out to discover whether non-heterosexual attitudes toward marriage and family would explain why legal marital status has become so desirable, and to determine which non-heterosexuals are most inclined to sympathize with the movement toward assimilation through marriage into the US family system.

Assuming the door to the closet is more or less permanently ajar, Americans can finally look past queer family politics into the private family lives of non-heterosexuals, their partners and their children (Lambert 2005). The openness of non-heterosexuals has blurred the once rock-hard line separating a devalued queer subculture from a dominant culture that privileges heterosexuality in all its institutions, including marriage and family. I will demonstrate that it is not clear at all that non-heterosexual people hold radically different values or concerns about family life than their heterosexual neighbors, friends, or family members. In fact, a number of non-heterosexual people hold values similar to those held by the majority of heterosexuals, and thus are concerned about many of the same issues regarding family life and public policy as their heterosexual siblings, friends and neighbors.

Values, beliefs, and structure influence decision-making, stability, health, satisfaction and quality of life for individuals in families. More importantly, marriage itself has been demonstrated to be a relatively effective and highly desirable social arrangement that brings benefits to adult partners, their children and communities. The claim that gays and lesbians should be denied full marriage rights is often based on an assumption about an inherent and unalterable difference in values between the heterosexual majority and non-heterosexual minorities. More vehement and malicious opponents of same-sex marriage characterize this purported difference as moral deficiency on the part of non-heterosexuals and fuel anti-gay sentiment by decrying the “homosexual agenda” as a master plan to undermine the value structures and normative expectations that form the foundation of family life.

There is no organized, anti-family “homosexual agenda” driving the same-sex marriage movement; rather, gays and lesbians are more visible in public life, more open with and about their families, and more vocal in their desire for legal and social equality. Collectively, lesbians and gays in the United States appear to be leaning toward assimilation, moving toward an understanding of marriage as an expression of both individual love and a human right (Howard-Hassmann 2001). Although marriage is not a universally popular goal among non-heterosexuals, the backlash against gay rights and same-sex marriage in

particular observed recently in California and across the country makes casting any trend toward assimilationist politics as “surrender” or “capitulation” tantamount to ignoring the cultural climate and political changes that have encouraged lesbians and gays to stand up and demand equality, to conceive personal futures more broadly, and in many cases to imagine a world where marriage and family-making is desirable, acceptable and finally, truly possible. Perhaps those who have welcomed their friends, sisters, brothers, daughters and sons into life “beyond the closet” have already recognized the pronounced *similarities* between the family headed by “Eve and Lillie” and the more traditional family of “Roger and Evelyn,” and have come to understand that the practical *differences* between “Adam and Steve” and “Adam and Eve” are probably more imagined than real.

#### *A Test of the Conservative Case*

“Same-sex relationships have been an integral part of the kinship system, household economies and iconography of many societies,” writes Barry D. Adam, but “In the contemporary advanced industrial societies of the West, the conceptualization of same-sex relationship is remarkably underdeveloped, both in scholarship and the public imagination” (2004:267). Few researchers have tested the “conservative case” for same-sex marriage (see Sullivan 1995), that is, whether the movement toward integration into the traditional family system through the well-established institution of marriage is a result of a demonstrated commitment to traditional US familism, or to values that have long been deemed “traditional family values.” The dearth of empirical research on the attitudes and values of lesbian and gay individuals—and particularly those in families and intimate relationships (Allen and Demo 1995)—has encouraged sympathetic advocates to rely, perhaps too heavily, on historical analogy, appeals to common sense or norms of justice to fashion arguments in favor of same-sex marriage. Consider comments by Jonathan Rauch:

For eons, human communities have favored more marriage over less.

They have believed that marriage is a powerful stabilizing force: that it disciplines and channels crazymaking love and troublemaking libido; that

stability and discipline are socially beneficial, even precious. Communities everywhere believe this, and everywhere they have been right. (2004:80)

There is little empirical evidence to suggest that same-sex marriage will *not* bring many of the same social and individual benefits as heterosexual marriage, although in fairness, sociologists and other social scientists do not yet know whether this is true. Research on what marriage actually means to those who are affected by its unavailability, or those who would be affected if marriage were among their choices for giving meaning to their lives and loves is in short supply. While we know that marriage implies a host of government and social benefits unavailable to the unmarried generally and unavailable to same-sex couples specifically, we do not know with any degree of precision how the non-heterosexual population in the United States actually sees marriage. Are members of this population really “anti-family,” as opponents claim, or do they hold attitudes toward marriage that closely resemble attitudes held by heterosexuals? If their attitudes toward marriage are similar to heterosexuals’, then it is necessary to explain that similarity. Differences in attitudes toward marriage also warrant empirical investigation and explanation. Both might help predict the shape of family and family policy in the future.

Sociological understanding of the shift from liberationist rhetoric and ideology to a strategy of assimilation into the US family system through marriage is critical to securing full equality for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and others whose status as non-heterosexuals has been the basis for denying them not only the civil rights inherent in citizenship, but the human rights to which they are entitled by nothing less than their existence. It is not enough to assume that individuals and groups with shared values or customs simply have those things in common; better to acknowledge that people purposefully generate the realities and relationships in which they live (Morgan 1996), including families. If homosexuals who want to marry hold values more similar than not to those held by their heterosexual peers, and if they are living their family lives based on those same normative values to the extent it is

possible, then it makes very little sense to continue to deny members of this group access to marriage equality (Wedgwood 1999).

### *Overview of the Study*

Marriage rights for homosexuals have been the subject of intense political activism and discussion among pundits, commentators and scholars for several years. While “the heated debates about same-sex marriage are focused largely on the probable social effects of same-sex marriage, civil unions, and similar legal recognitions of homosexual pairings” (Glenn 2004:25), there may in fact be little cause for alarm. What research there is on same-sex families tends to confirm that at this point in history, there are few practical differences between heterosexual couples and same-sex couples (Kurdek 2004, 2005, 2006; Patterson 2000; Carrington 1999) even when these couples have children (Peplau and Beals 2004), and regardless of whether the couples are married or cohabiting. In his review of the literature on same-sex couples, Kurdek (2005) points out that apart from negotiations of domestic division of labor and perceptions of relationship support, married couples and same-sex couples are more similar than not when it comes to satisfaction, stability and conflict in relationships. While their families might be isolated from key support systems, and they may manage their households based on a logic other than gender, it seems clear that same-sex-headed households operate more or less the same way as the households of their different-sex counterparts who have the benefit of socially and legally recognized marriage.

My research is designed to augment previous research, to help explain why same-sex couples appear to be so similar to heterosexual couples in the first place, and to offer a prediction that the movement to embrace assimilationist values might result in more such findings in future research on lesbian and gay families. I use survey data to describe relationships and family structures, social networks and community integration of non-heterosexuals and to measure values and “pro-marriage” attitudes among gays, lesbians and other non-heterosexuals. I attempt to identify the forces and experiences that influence individuals to embrace the movement to secure marriage rights for same-sex couples after

decades of liberationist politics that put marriage far lower on the list of priorities. I want to understand why marriage has become so important, and to whom among the diverse population of gay, lesbians and bisexual people marriage really matters. Why has this human community decided that more marriage is better than less, and what does that mean for the future of the family in the United States?

### The *Quest for Quotidian* Online Survey

*Quest for Quotidian* is based on data collected via an online survey conducted between January and May, 2006, after approval of the research protocol (OPRS# 0510-1773) on December 8, 2005, by the Social/Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Subsequent modifications to the protocol to adjust the sampling methods were approved in January and March. Data collection began January 17 and ended May 31, 2006, when the online survey was closed to new respondents.

The *Quest for Quotidian* survey was a custom-designed multi-path, response-driven online interview hosted on at <http://www.socioscape.com/research> behind a Secure Server Link (SSL) certificate. The programmed questionnaire included more than 150 substantive questions—including matrix questions to accommodate multi-item scales—displayed across more than 100 individual pages or “screens.” Unlike self-administered paper surveys, the online questionnaire is flexible and responsive to participants, and allows researchers to simulate an interview survey by probing respondents for additional and clarifying information when their responses require it. For instance, when respondents reported having been married before, the survey displayed questions pertaining to prior marriages and captured whether the prior partner was of the same or different sex, how long the previous marriage lasted, and whether the marriage ended in death or divorce. Similar paths were constructed to capture alternative relationship histories, including civil unions and domestic partnerships. Single, never-married respondents did not see such questions.

Among the measures taken were relationship status, relationship history, relationship quality (e.g., Booth, Johnson, and Edwards 1983), relationship satisfaction (Winston et al 1999), commitment (Stanley and Markman 1992) and expectations for marriage (McLanahan et al. 2003) for coupled individuals. I collected data on parental status and the children of gay and lesbian parents, including children's ages, the nature and quality of relationships between respondent and children, custody arrangements and children's residence, and satisfaction with parent-child relationships. The survey captured living arrangements and household structure, as well as power relations within households (e.g., by determining home ownership or primary financial responsibility for home or apartment). Items measuring levels of family support for the respondent and, when applicable, his or her primary relationship (adapted from the questionnaire used in Johnson et al. 2001), social support from friends and the community, the size and character of friendship networks (Social Capital Benchmark Community Survey, 2000), neighborhood and community characteristics and levels of satisfaction with home and community (Milligan et al. 2006; Pew Research Center 1997; Perkins 1985) were also included. Several measures of physical and psychological wellbeing were included in the questionnaire. Frequency of smoking, alcohol and drug use, exercise, and quality of diet were measured to develop a "healthy lifestyle" scale. To assess psychological well-being, I measured self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965) and mastery or empowerment as well (see Pearlin et. al 1981).

In addition to standard demographic data (age, gender, education, race, ethnicity, income, etc.), items also capture religiosity (currently, and in family of origin), a limited marital history of respondents' parents, education of respondents' parents, current political orientation, and current or past military service. The design view of the online survey questionnaire shows all survey items, and is included in its entirety in the appendix. Individual respondents saw only those questions and screens applicable to them based on prior responses. Depending upon the answers the respondent provided, the survey took between 35 and 50 minutes to complete.



Online data collection strategies and web-based surveys are both popular and relatively inexpensive, have other advantages over more traditional surveys, including lower response times, flexibility in presentation and format, richer information about participants' interaction with the survey, and in many cases increased efficiency and accuracy because respondents enter data directly into databases, thereby eliminating intermediate data processing steps increase the chance of errors (see discussion in Granello and Wheaton 2004). Web-based surveys of various types are especially useful to gaining access to hard-to-reach or marginalized populations, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups, who arguably might "use the Internet in disproportionately *greater* numbers" than heterosexuals generally (Riggle, Rostosky, and Reedy 2005:2). Although there are limitations to web-based research, particularly with regard to sampling procedures, response rates and representativeness (Granello and Wheaton 2004), some researchers have found that when these limitations are adequately addressed in research design, findings from web-based research appear to be consistent with findings from traditional research (Gosling et al. 2004; Whittier, Seeley, and St. Lawrence 2004).

Research urges caution, however, when using established measures in internet research. Psychologists and sociologists must be cognizant of sample differences as well as measurement equivalence when translating scales and other measures from traditional paper-and-pencil formats to web-based questionnaires. Barbeite and Weiss (2004) demonstrated that some measures might need to be modified for the online environment and internet samples to preserve the validity of some scales. In a specific example addressing measurement equivalence, Vispoel, Boo and Bleiler (2001) found that results from the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale used in this survey were not significantly influenced by the mode of delivery; that is, the web-based version of the scale worked as well as the traditional paper-and-pencil version. Although more research is needed on the efficacy of measurement and ultimate utility of online data collection strategies and procedures, the web-based survey remains in

my estimation a powerful tool for gathering information from lesbian, gay and other non-heterosexual individuals.

### *Sampling and Recruitment*

The ubiquity of non-heterosexual characters and themes in mainstream media representations—such as television’s “Ellen,” “Will & Grace,” “The L-Word,” “Queer as Folk,” “Six Feet Under” and the more recent “Brothers & Sisters;” or popular films like “Milk,” “Brokeback Mountain,” or “TransAmerica”—overstate the degree of integration of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people into American social life. Ironically, these representations often elide the marginalization experienced by non-heterosexual individuals in the United States at the same time lesbian and gay people are increasingly visible precisely because of the public struggle to secure equal rights for themselves and their families. It is still largely true that “lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are outnumbered and despised” (Sherrill 1996: 469) by many, and for many reasons remain a uniquely marginalized, relatively hard-to-reach population for survey researchers:

Gay people, by virtue of being born into a diaspora, are not highly concentrated geographically. More important, identity is not transmitted within the family. Unlike almost all other demographic groups, gay people are unique by virtue of being minorities within their own families and by virtue of going through childhood socialization experiences designed to make them the opposite of what they are. That is, almost all gay people are born into heterosexual homes, are imbued with heterosexual norms—including the belief that heterosexuality is superior to homosexuality and, perhaps, the belief that homosexuality is deviant and morally inferior behavior—and are expected to act as if they were heterosexual. (Sherrill 1996:469)

Non-heterosexuals remain, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a “hidden” population to demographers and social researchers, both as a consequence of historical prejudice and institutional discrimination, and because of the tendency of researchers and ethics boards to perpetuate

stereotypes of lesbians, gays, and bisexuals as criminal or deviant, to relegate them to the margins populated by straight men on the “down low” (men who have sex with men), IV drug users, homeless people with HIV or other maladies, and other groups usually deemed to be suspect because they might engage in behaviors that have an adverse affect on public health or safety. Under the guise of “protecting” non-heterosexuals, we often force them back into the closet where research is concerned, and in doing so fail to recognize that many gay and lesbian individuals are not living on the margins, but are living publicly, in the open, and without the shame or stigma implied by the status of “hidden population.” Nevertheless, this study proceeds from the assumption that non-heterosexuals technically constitute a hidden population, which largely determined the sampling techniques used.

Hidden populations present unique problems for survey researchers, primarily because of the inability to construct a sampling frame from which to draw a random sample that allows estimation of population parameters. Consequently, most studies of hidden or hard-to-reach populations rely on some form of chain-referral or “snowball” sample, which are non-random and usually convenience samples. Initially, *Quest for Quotidian* was designed to incorporate a version of “respondent-driven sampling,” or RDS (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004; Heckathorn 2002), adapted for use with a web-based survey, an approach that has since been validated (Wejnert and Heckathorn 2008). In RDS, network ties between respondents are specified and captured in the data, which allows researchers to generalize from the sample to the social network, and from the social network to the population with a higher degree of statistical validity than in similar studies relying on other non-random sampling techniques (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004:200). This approach was used in this research design to bolster the defense of my findings about non-heterosexuals against common criticisms of sampling bias that plagues most studies based on non-random samples. Unfortunately, I was unable to resolve the conflict between the data requirements of RDS and a dictate of the Institutional Review Board at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, that effectively prohibited me from linking cases to one another without putting an undue burden on survey

participants. The attempt to follow the recommendations of the IRB caused the recruitment chains to collapse altogether, and without the ability to capture social network data, RDS was abandoned in favor of more traditional non-random sampling techniques.

Participants were recruited in a number of ways. The earliest respondents were recruited directly by email after having agreed to serve as “seeds” for the chain-referral sample. Once the RDS strategy was retired, these seed participants were sent another email asking them to pass along a call for participation to friends they believe might be interested in completing the survey. Flyers calling for participation in the research were distributed alongside free publications placed in gay-owned or gay-friendly businesses in various locations in southern California and in Nevada. Flyers were also distributed by volunteers during the Gay Pride celebration in Las Vegas in 2005. Online, I obtained permission from forum moderators to post calls for participation in gay-oriented discussion groups on social networking sites, including the popular MySpace.com and Friendster.com. In addition to social networking sites, I sent email invitations to openly gay or lesbian authors of various weblogs, or “blogs,” asking them to participate and pass along the request to people they knew or to their friends. Many bloggers chose to post a link to the online survey on their blogs, although I did not ask them to do so, and a number of respondents came to the survey via those links. All respondents who attempted the survey and entered an email address were sent a request to pass along the link and call for participants to their friends, but there is no way to track the success of that initiative. Whenever possible, I contacted participants whose responses were incomplete via email and urged them to complete the survey. Several did in fact return and completed the online questionnaire. When the survey closed on May 31, 2005, a total of 699 attempted responses had been entered into the database, including more than 50 responses from individuals in ten countries outside the United States. The final sample analyzed in this work includes 466 cases, exclusive of responses from outside the US, incomplete responses, and disqualified cases.

### *Measuring Attitudes Toward Marriage*

At the heart of the survey were items taken from various surveys about marriage conducted by researchers seeking to establish the strength of marriage in the United States (Glenn 2005; Hawkins et al. 2002; Johnson et al. 2001). Also included in the survey are items modified from accepted measures of support for marriage. They were adapted to measure attitudes toward specifically homosexual relationships and the contexts in which they exist.

Assessing attitudes toward marriage as positive or negative requires a starting point, namely the assumption that marriage is in fact “good” for men, women, children and society. This starting point is provided in popular and scholarly discourse by advocates for the defense of traditional marriage, who tend to believe that marriage—and by extension, the family system—has been weakened by changes in the cultural and political landscape (Blankenhorn 2007; Nock 2005; Cherlin 2004; Waite and Gallagher 2000; Whitehead 1998; see also Whitehead and Popenoe 2004-2008). Some of these changes have long histories. For example, the ascendance of individualism in US culture and society (particularly in jurisprudence) has long been viewed by many as a development detrimental to traditional marriage (see Bellah et al. 1996), and indeed to the bonds that ought to exist between married people (see Blankenhorn 1996, 2007). Associated with the rise of individualism are the changing status of women and consequent changes in domestic and work role expectations for women and men, the turn toward no-fault divorce, the increase in single-parenting and out-of-wedlock childbirth, increasing acceptance of cohabitation over marriage, and the acceptance of non-heterosexual people in increasingly visible public and private social roles. Logically, we can assume that attitudes favorable to marriage are somewhat conservative attitudes that more or less reflect a commitment to or belief in the historical and traditional functions of marriage and family. Such “pro-marriage” attitudes would not be radically divergent from traditional norms, nor from definitions of what we might call traditional family values.

Among those studying the strength of support for marriage in the general population, there is a relatively clear consensus about which attitudes are more or less favorable to the institution (Brumbaugh et al. 2008; Herzog 2008; Cherlin 2004; Glenn 2001; Whitehead 1998; Johnson et al. 2001; Nock 1995, 2005; see discussion in Stacey 1996). For example, strong support for monogamy or fidelity is interpreted as more favorable to marriage than weak support of same (Glenn 2005; Waite and Gallagher 2000). An expressed or implied preference for marriage over cohabitation is likewise viewed as more favorable to marriage (Bowman 2004). Attitudes that imply or express belief in marriage as an “ideal” family structure—the best structure in which to raise children, or the best way to ensure social support for families—clearly fail to challenge either the role of the institution or the promises marriage makes to the family system. Dissatisfaction or discomfort with divorce, either as an individual choice or a social problem, might also be interpreted as an attitude favorable to what we understand “marriage” is or ought to be.

These attitudes tell a somewhat one-sided story about marriage in the United States, however. First, most researchers examining attitudes toward marriage are concerned about the health and stability of the institution as it is traditionally understood, e.g., an institution that legitimizes *heterosexual* sexual activity through norms of monogamy, and organizes childrearing, economic activities and social responsibilities more or less according to the negotiated gender ideology shared by participants. Working from such a definition, it makes sense to survey only those individuals who are already married, as well as those who can reasonably expect to marry in the future. Thus, participants in survey research on the strength of marriage are almost certainly overwhelmingly heterosexual, and very likely will be currently married or divorced from a previous marriage.

Given that non-heterosexuals constitute a relatively small minority in the population, the dominance of heterosexuals in such surveys is neither surprising nor problematic, at least at first glance. What is problematic is the potentially systematic exclusion of non-heterosexuals, and gay and lesbian people in particular: individuals who do hold attitudes

toward marriage but whose inability to marry now or failure to marry earlier in their lives might necessarily disqualify them from full participation in such research. Even when their voices are included, it seems likely that lesbian and gay attitudes toward marriage will be “less favorable” on average than those of heterosexuals either because (1) they have never been married or experienced the benefits, community recognition and affirmation, or family support associated with married life; (2) they cannot foresee or even seriously imagine legal marriage in their future; or (3) they have already left or came out within an unsatisfying or unhappy heterosexual marriage. By assuming that “traditional” marriage—which excludes most non-heterosexuals—is the measuring stick for a “strong” marriage culture, researchers are likely, if not bound, to interpret attitudes that express ambivalence toward this definition as evidence that marriage is becoming “weaker,” or as Cherlin (2004) argues, increasingly “deinstitutionalized.” Attitudes of gays and lesbians, if they are counted at all, are thus more likely *presumed* to be “less favorable” toward marriage and family. If they are not counted, non-heterosexuals are assumed to hold less favorable attitudes toward marriage simply because they are not participating in it. This situation would suggest that much research might enable and exacerbate scapegoating among anti-gay activists, who use findings from such studies to bolster claims that non-heterosexuals are at least partially to blame for the steady “deinstitutionalization” of marriage observed in the US family system over the past several decades.

Rather than misrepresent the strength of non-heterosexual attitudes toward marriage, or dismiss out-of-hand the very idea that lesbians, bisexuals or gay men might value certain key aspects of traditional marriage, in this study I isolate and measure values and attitudes of non-heterosexuals that indicate support for marriage as we know the institution today, that is, as it is defined for heterosexuals in the general population. This attitudinal “support for marriage,” however, is not the same as support for same-sex marriage, or for extending the rights and responsibilities of marriage to a sexually marginalized segment of the population. Some members of the non-heterosexual population might accept the basic principles and

definition of the institution as a guiding set of ideals for the conduct of intimate relationships in their own lives, but many of these same people might reject these values and beliefs if they interpret same-sex marriage as an imposition of social control onto non-heterosexuals as a group. In this study, I attempt to correct at least a few of the possible deficiencies in studies of attitudes toward marriage by focusing on the attitudes held by gay, lesbian and bisexual people. That the degree of support for the ideologically “traditional” marriage is probably lower among non-heterosexuals than among heterosexuals is not in dispute. Neither would I deny that a significant segment of the “queer” population might find marriage undesirable or unpalatable, politically or personally—such positions are well articulated in the literature and in contemporary cultural discourse (Stacey 2004; Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001; Lehr 1999; Struening 1999; Warner 1999; Berlant and Warner 1998; Ettelbrick 1992).

### *Analyses*

The analyses of survey data was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 11.5. The results of my research include a detailed profile of single individuals and people in both different-sex and same-sex relationships—intimate partnerships and unions that are “marriage-like” in all ways but one. One of the elements of that profile is a description of the values held by gays, lesbians and bisexuals toward marriage, values which opponents of marriage equality often claim are fundamentally different from the values held by the majority of heterosexuals. Because political debates and ballot initiatives across the country often center on whether “the gays” and the culture they enact is worthy of the benefits of marriage, a major contribution of this research is the identification of some of the characteristics and social forces that distinguish non-heterosexuals who hold strong “pro-marriage” attitudes from those who hold weaker attitudes toward the institution.

### The Organization of this Book

This book is organized into eight chapters, including this introductory chapter and the concluding chapter in which I discuss implications of my findings, themes that emerged in



the research, ways to improve research on same-sex couples and their families, and questions warranting future research.

### *Social Contexts*

Chapters Two and Three address in more detail the ideological and legal contexts in which debates over same-sex marriage and the family are occurring. Chapter Two explains the intellectual and political divides between assimilationist and liberationist ideologies, as well as the divisive influence of anti-gay rhetoric from the “religious right” and other social conservatives that has influenced the cultural discourse on gay rights generally and marriage rights particularly. I examine familism in the United States, specify the elements of “pro-marriage” ideology, and outline concerns about the changing structure and culture of family life in the United States. These include sexual concerns about monogamy and commitment, the concern over stability of two-parent families, the negative effects of divorce, the differential benefits and detriments of marriage and cohabitation. In Chapter Three, I examine the recent history and evolution of gay and marriage rights in the US law against the backdrop of resistance enshrined by fundamentalist Christian activism in anti-gay rhetoric and propaganda, or the so-called “homosexual agenda.” Despite repeated attempts by anti-gay forces to spark moral panics in various states and communities, social acceptance of gay people and same-sex marriage appears to be progressing steadily in the courts, legislatures and in public opinion. Overall, these chapters describe the various ways by which historical change in the family institution is interpreted by scholars and public opinion leaders, and suggests that while critiques of same-sex marriage from both the right and the left are still relevant, it is assimilationist ideology that is carrying the day, and generating a new model for understanding the current state of family in the United States.

### *Descriptive Data: The Quest for Quotidian Sample*

Chapters Four and Five describe the sample in some detail, beginning with a discussion of how non-heterosexuals identify themselves and are identified by researchers. In Chapter Four, I describe the geographic distribution of the sample, and trace patterns in the data

regarding age and “coming out,” or disclosing sexual identity, to friends, family and the community. Data on the family lives and family histories of non-heterosexuals are examined in Chapter Five. In this chapter, information about respondents’ childhood—including their parents’ marriage, education levels, and religiosity—is discussed, along with current religious belief and practice, relationship and parental status, friendship networks and family support, and community and political involvement.

*Assimilation or Liberation? Analysis  
of Attitudes Toward Marriage*

In Chapter Six, I report descriptive findings from the survey on various attitudes considered “pro-marriage,” namely that marriage is socially relevant, permanent and enduring; that marriage is essential to rearing healthy children, and that children derive benefits from marriage; that marriage is a serious commitment; that monogamy is central to marriage; and that divorce is a social problem that ought to be addressed. Patterns and frequencies in the data are reported. The attitude measures described independently in Chapter Six are combined to form a Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS), which captures the strength of support for more or less traditional marriage among members of the sample, and serves as a proxy for commitment to assimilationist ideology. In Chapter Seven, I explore several hypotheses about the social forces and conditions that predict PMAS scores, and develop a regression model that partially explains the strength of marriage expressed by non-heterosexuals, as well as the impetus behind the movement toward assimilation among lesbians and gay men.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IDEOLOGICAL POSITIONS ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

The arguments for and against expanding marital rights and benefits to same-sex couples and their families fit neatly into established models of family change and family politics that fall along continua variously described as “conservative” to “liberal” (Glenn 2000; Benokraitis 2000), “prohibitionist” to “liberationist” (Sullivan 1995), “assimilationist” to “liberationist” (Seidman 2001, 2002), “assimilationist” to “radical” (Yep, Lovaas and Elia 2003), and even the less charitable “suits” and “sluts” (Shepard 2002). Conservatives continue to argue against changing the definition of marriage, claiming that doing so would only further weaken the moral fabric of the country and create a larger economic burden on the state to support what some have called the “special rights” of homosexuals and other marginalized groups. In this research I follow Seidman’s relatively benign characterization of the ideological positions in public opinion and policy debates, and describe support for same-sex marriage as *assimilationist*, and opposition to same-sex marriage as *liberationist* among non-heterosexuals.

The relatively recent emergence of real possibilities to extend marriage rights to homosexuals was somewhat an historical and political surprise, marking a significant shift in priorities within the queer body politic:

Since the Stonewall rebellion of 1969, two generations of gay activists have pushed for a variety of policies to benefit LGBT Americans—including laws against employment discrimination, the abolition of sodomy laws, hate-crimes statutes that explicitly protect LGBT people, resources to prevent and treat breast cancer and AIDS, and domestic

partner benefits. By contrast, the right to a state-sanctioned marriage had until recently only rarely appeared on the agenda of either grassroots activist groups or the so-called boardroom gay rights organizations like the Human Rights Campaign. (Egan and Sherrill 2005:229)

Despite its seemingly sudden appearance in the 1990s, same-sex marriage is not quite the dark horse on the queer political horizon some would have us believe. Rather, the surge of interest in marriage among gays and lesbians is better understood as the ascendance of an assimilationist political goal long abandoned by leaders of the gay liberation movement to languish while a more workable public agenda formed around liberationist ideologies. Seidman's (2002) discussion of the political debates within the gay and lesbian community reveals familiar contradictions and divisions among activists that undercut the stereotype of a unified "queer nation" with a purely liberal or "anti-family" agenda. Seidman notes that activists have historically taken one of two positions on gay marriage (see also Lehr 1999). A relatively conservative assimilationist position, reminiscent of liberal feminism, advocates full legal recognition of gay and lesbian equality, citing the right to marry as a path toward integration, and away from economic exploitation (see Eskridge 1996), alienation and discrimination (see Sullivan 1995, 2004). Alternatively, the liberationist position interprets marriage as an inherently flawed heterosexist institution better abandoned than embraced by a sexual minority whose relative powerlessness and collective identity are maintained respectively by exclusion from and resistance to normative notions of marriage and family.

Warner (1999) questions why marriage rights appeared on the gay political horizon at all, when for so many years leaders and organizations had ignored the sticky question of gay marriage based on earlier criticism of marriage and family by activists and scholars in the gay civil rights movement, as well as more pressing contemporary issues in the 1980s such as HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, and legal persecution on sodomy laws. In her reading of Carl Wittman's liberationist-oriented *A Gay Manifesto* (1971), Lehr notes the hostility of early homosexual activism toward "family values," which were viewed as "harmful to gay and

lesbian lives” and “remain now harmful to other social groups as well, because these family values are embedded in maintaining a social organization that privileges a few” (Lehr 1999: 45). Maintaining a sense of difference—sexual and social—is crucial to the gay liberationist project, according to Warner, who characterizes marriage as granting “selective legitimacy” to some couples at the expense of others (1999:82), a limiting and limited social institution based on heterosexist norms of prejudice and discrimination, which queer politics can and should continue to resist. Goss (1997) speaks of “appropriation of the term family” to describe what Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan (2001) interpret as reluctance to abandon the liberationist critique among even “the most passionate theoretical advocates” (Weeks et al. 2001:16) for gay marriage rights.

Weeks et al. (2001) describe assimilationist political activism aimed at guaranteeing partnership and family rights for same-sex couples as an international phenomenon, the goals of which Stonewall, a British lobby, codified as part of their mission in the late 1990s. “Two of the ‘five key challenges of [Stonewall’s] equality agenda focus on equal recognition and respect for same sex partners; and equal recognition and respect for lesbian and gay parents and their children” (Stonewall 1997, cited in Weeks et al. 2001:3). What is important about the rise of assimilationist queer politics is its relatively conservative slant on a classically liberal problem: full citizenship in participatory democracy. Sullivan (1989) argue even earlier, for instance, that “much of the gay leadership clings to notions of gay life as essentially outsider, antibourgeois, radical. Marriage, for them, is co-optation into straight society,” a position that Sullivan contends ignores the subject position of the gay or lesbian people as citizens, or as Seidman (2002) puts it, sexual citizens. Gays and lesbians, from Seidman’s perspective, live within a state-sanctioned sexual hierarchy that punishes alternative sexual identities and practices perceived to be “immoral and dangerous to society. Bad sexual citizens become the targets of social control, which may include public stereotyping, harassment, violence, criminalization, and disenfranchisement” (Seidman 2002:172). Not surprisingly, “sex laws and policies are guided by a norm of the good sexual citizen,” writes

Seidman, and “the good sexual citizen was most definitely heterosexual” (Seidman 2002:172-3). Except in terms of entitlement to basic human rights associated with citizenship, how else is the contradiction of pro-marriage activism on the part of gay assimilationists explained? Seidman offers that so many among the most “libertine” groups of individuals wish to partake in one of the most “conservative” forms of social interaction and structure in order to transform themselves from bad to good sexual citizens, but full citizens overall.

### Liberal Gay Politics as Resistance

Liberationists, however, were not silent on family issues or on what were perceived as the dangers of trying to effect change from within institutional structures. Moral panics, some warned, were an ever-present threat to the cautious gains in social status and acceptance credited to assimilationist politics (Warner 1999), precisely because sexual politics were only palatable when they were divorced from the lived reality of the sexual practices of marginalized groups:

Theodor Adorno, the great German philosopher who spent many years in America after fleeing Nazi Germany, was able to say as early as 1962 that attempts to reform the regulation of sex had “something venerably suffragette-like about them.” But, he went on, people fool themselves about progress. Sexual taboos have not fallen away at all. “Whereas sexuality has been integrated, that which cannot be integrated, the actual spiciness of sex, continues to be detested by society.” In fact, Adorno thought that this was true not despite the new premium on sexual expression, but because of it. (Warner 1999:21-22)

Warner is among those critics who suggest that assimilation of queer identities requires subordination of those identities—expressed through sexual practices and emotional orientation toward members of the same sex—to the same institutionalized norms and patterns that serve as the bases for discrimination against non-heterosexual people. Read

this way, the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy in the US military is not just a bump on the road to a more tolerant future. From the liberationist perspective, such policies are the future of assimilationist activism: the institutionalization of the closet for queer individuals.

The fears of liberationists are similar to those from the ranks of radical and socialist feminism, whose criticisms of both conservative and liberal positions on social change point insistently toward the failure of classical liberalism to acknowledge the persistent prejudice and inequality embedded in social relations and power structures, including those in contemporary democratic societies. “The extension of marriage and family rights” in particular, according to Lehr (1999:14), “to gays and lesbians would serve to foreclose serious questioning of the values embedded within current understandings of marriage and family. Such foreclosure would mean that the extension of rights will have taken away the possibility of enhancing freedom.” Lehr calls for recognition that progress does not come free, while Warner pessimistically reminds us that a discourse of dissent continues to exist, even within social systems moving toward progressive changes. As Cell (1999) observed regarding the reactionary emergence of racial segregation and apartheid, it appears the closer gays and lesbians get to securing equality for themselves and their families, the more palpable the risk of devastating backlash from the enemies of a family culture redefined by freedom.

### Conservative Perspectives on Family Change

Mobilization for and against family change has been active for years, and certainly predates current particular controversies, including same-sex marriage. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the family was a contentious topic among scholars and policymakers worried about high divorce rates, non-marital cohabitation, domestic violence, single motherhood, and the welfare of children. Broadly speaking, family reforms and implementation of progressive policies were proceeding apace during this period, often tempered by the rational criticisms emanating from scholars farther to the right.

There was by no means a simple “bifurcation” of the debate, however. Glenn notes that “no division into conservatives versus liberals or any similar dichotomous distinction fully captures the complexity of the factions and schools of thought” on the causes and consequences of family change (2000:2). Benokraitis (2000) offers a helpful typology summarizing the perspectives that dominated “family wars” in recent decades. Benokraitis’ four models of family change—conservative, centrist, liberal and feminist—serve as a basis for understanding how interpretations of family problems and their proposed solutions might be distributed across the political and sociological spectra.

The conservative and centrist models, which offer more pessimistic interpretations of family change, are often characterized as a backlash, a yearning for maintenance of traditions that perpetuated inequality and which were no longer workable or desirable solutions to the problems of contemporary family life. Historian Stephanie Coontz in particular argued in her influential book, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (1992), that the popular history of family is largely imaginary, and that the comfort derived from what was perceived as the “traditional family” of the past is no more than an ideological illusion:

Like most visions of a “golden age,” the “traditional family” ... evaporates on closer examination. It is an ahistorical amalgam of structures, values and behaviors that never coexisted in the same time and place. The notion that traditional families fostered intense intimacy between husbands and wives while creating mothers who were totally available to their children, for example, is an idea that combines some characteristics of the white, middle class family in the mid-nineteenth century and some of a rival family ideal first articulated in the 1920s. The first family revolved emotionally around the mother-child axis, leaving the husband-wife relationship stilted and formal. The second focused on an eroticized couple relationship, demanding that mothers curb emotional “overinvestment” in their children. The hybrid idea



that a woman can be fully absorbed with her youngsters while simultaneously maintaining passionate sexual excitement with her husband was a 1950s invention that drove thousands of women to therapists, tranquilizers, or alcohol when they actually tried to live up to it. (Coontz 1992:9)

Those who disagreed with feminist or liberal interpretations of family change, who argued that decline in morality or values was the cause of family problems, or who argued that some changes to the family might be detrimental or even dangerous to individuals and society were seen to be suffering from a politically-motivated form of “nostalgia.” Scholars like David Popenoe and Norval Glenn, and social critics like Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Blankenhorn, were cast as ideologues (Stacey 2004) whose critiques of family change from both institutional and developmental perspectives—analyses of benefits of marriage to men and women; deleterious effects of divorce on individual and family well-being, and on children’s outcomes; the changing meanings of parenthood and the diminution of the importance of fathers; negative consequences of an emergent “divorce culture,” etc.—should be dismissed by “progressives” as uptight indictments of feminist understanding of family issues, reflecting the conservative values and patriarchal commitments of the ruling cultural elite.

It is true that scholars and commentators leaning to the right tended to advocate some restraint in the implementation of some progressive family policies; criticism of no-fault divorce is an example. Many have advocated policies that would make divorces more difficult to obtain, thus creating disincentives for divorcing couples. “Covenant marriage” is one example of such a policy (Hawkins et al. 2002). Generally, however, the writing and research of centrist and conservative critics reflects a genuine concern for the family as an institution, and for the well-being of families and family members themselves. Many policies advocated by conservatives or moderate centrists, particularly those designed to prepare potential partners for marriage, strengthen existing marriages, and reduce couple conflict and avoid divorce, found their way into programmatic repertoires in a number of states. This

occurred even while the historical prejudices and social-structural problems that affect men, women and their families continued to be criticized by those who believed that the family was showing evidence of positive change—increasing diversity to accommodate changing patterns of intimacy, increased egalitarianism in family and marital relationships, and a growing tolerance of alternative families and identities. The debates in the 1990s over the future of the family were healthy ones, despite the gulf that was perceived to exist between the various factions.

Debate within the various ideological factions, too, was healthy. The centrist position provided a foil to more hardline conservative positions by acknowledging that changes observed in family structure and behavior were linked to larger shifts in the social environment and culture. Women's increased participation in the workforce, for example, was seen by most centrists neither as reversible nor inherently "bad" for the family. Rather, ways to accommodate the change in gendered patterns of employment for the benefit of society—and children in particular—were more the focus of moderate centrist thinkers on women, work and family. The dissatisfaction with the relatively slow pace of change voiced by left-leaning scholars and activists suggests that what changes were occurring would likely have eventually occurred anyway. The goal from the centrist perspective, then, is to minimize the possible negative consequences of family change. More extreme conservative approaches often seek to reverse those changes entirely, and are often characterized as "backlash" driven by the argument from nostalgia. As I have demonstrated, within the liberal and feminist camps that generally welcome family change, ambivalence was no less evident than in the conservative and centrist camps, particularly on the issue of civil marriage.

According to some defenders of traditional heterosexual marriage, the increasing demand for same-sex marriage is a consequence of the "privatization" of marriage that rewards adult-centered, individual interests over the public interest communities have in marriage and children. Blankenhorn (2007) cleanly summarizes this argument by defining traditional marriage as a public contract obligating couples to reproduce and rear children, and thus

fulfill an essential social function: procreation. Gay advocate Rauch (2004) has argued that too much emphasis is placed on the private character of intimate relationships, including same-sex partnerships, and rues the prevalence of divorce and its negative social effects. Rauch, however, interprets the public nature of marriage as a catalyst for the expansion and strengthening of the institution of marriage through inclusion of gay and lesbian couples.

While Rauch focuses on the idea that marriage would create families among same-sex couples, families empowered to care for and nurture children, and thus fulfill the social responsibilities associated with marriage and family life, Blankenhorn uses rights rhetoric to justify criticisms of divorce, single-parenting and same-sex marriage, basically claiming that every child has a right to a mother and a father. The presumption that rightful mothers and fathers are the married biological parents of children is the basis upon which Blankenhorn rejects the possibility of marriage between gay men and between lesbian women. He argues that alternatives to marriage, and same-sex marriage in particular, rely on an understanding of marriage as a *private* relationship rather than a *public* responsibility, which ultimately fails children and society, in his view.

The changes in the family system that have occurred over the past four decades have undeniably diminished the presumed importance of marriage in defining relationships between adults and children. For example, a man may be a father to a child—and not just a progenitor, but a “dad” or social father—without being bound through marriage to the child’s mother. Certainly divorced men and women who share custody of their children understand that their parenting roles (dad and mom) are no longer intertwined with marital roles (husband and wife). Indeed, women may choose to become mothers without giving a second thought to becoming someone’s wife. Such issues trouble advocates for traditional marriage, because they clearly suggest that parenting is no longer integrated into the “natural institution” of marriage (Blankenhorn 2007). Blankenhorn describes his perspective as a “conjugal conception of marriage,” a phrase borrowed from Ryan Anderson’s 2006 article, “Beyond Gay Marriage,” in which the author accuses gay activists of trying to

undermine American families and values. The expansion of marriage to include same-sex couples, Anderson claims, will result in “a culture, a legal system, and a government that considers a monogamous, exclusive, permanent sexual relationship of child-bearing and child-rearing nothing more than one among many lifestyle choices. The claim that marriage is normative for the flourishing of spouses, children, and society—not to mention any attempt to enshrine in law this unique human good—would be considered bigotry. In other words, marriage as a social institution would be destroyed.” Anderson’s shrill fear-mongering is muted in Blankenhorn’s work, but this position nevertheless reflects an ideology based on sexual complementarity and an all-too-often problematic gendered division of labor which “naturally” creates the “proper” context in which to rear children—heterosexual, and *only heterosexual*, marriage.

There is, of course, no such thing as a “natural” social institution. Social institutions seem natural precisely because they are institutions—organized rituals and practices, learned norms and behaviors, and valued relationship forms deeply embedded in a shared culture, and passed from generation to generation as a sort of collective habit. “Marriage” is the name given to the structure of relationships and patterns of interaction that solve certain problems in society. Blankenhorn insists that monogamous heterosexual *marriage* is natural, inevitable and unassailable, and cannot be separated from having children. Other forms of intimacy that are not immediately expressive of “natural” procreative potential are assumed to be inadequate to the tasks society has assigned to marriage and family, e.g., regulating sexual access and behavior, procreation, socialization of children, economic cooperation and financial support, emotional support and companionship. In only the oldest and most primitive societies would procreation and childrearing be the only recognizable functions of marriage, and even under the most primitive of social conditions, it would be absurd to assume that the institution of marriage evolves as a *precondition* to the natural processes of procreation that supposedly define it, which is precisely what the conjugal conception of marriage does.

If we follow Blankenhorn's implied line of reasoning, then cohabiting heterosexual couples who have children together are already functionally and *privately* married, and there is little need for the *public* social rituals associated with marriage. Notably, this precisely describes arguments that favor civil unions rather than legal marriage for same-sex couples. It is an argument that demonstrates that civil marriage is actually unnecessary, which leaves Blankenhorn and others who in the same breath decry same-sex marriage and the rise of cohabitation in the United States in the position of defending only *heterosexuality*, not marriage itself, as the institutional basis for public family and community life. In short, the private lives of non-heterosexual people simply do not measure up to the public standard, which is nothing more or less than a presumption of the moral and social superiority of heterosexuality.

The conjugal conception of marriage is a fancy way to say that marriage is about heterosexual procreation, which conveniently (and inaccurately) denies the existence of gay and lesbian families, and justifies the persistent denial of marriage rights to lesbian and gay couples. Same-sex couples challenge this traditional ideology (Demo and Allen 1996). The historical "evolution" of marriage is better understood as a process by which groups have adapted (and often rejected) the norms governing intimate and family relationships in response to social, demographic, technological, economic or political change. In a pure theoretical form, marriage would reflect what people actually do and how people actually live, even as it delimits the public and private boundaries of the family institution.

### Fear of Assimilation

Most agree that the moderately conservative assimilationist perspective—aimed at integration of gays and lesbians into mainstream social institutions—has carried the day in queer politics. Despite disappointments—the "don't ask, don't tell" policy, a Clinton-era compromise that allows homosexuals to serve in the military provided their sexual identity remains hidden; and the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA, 28 USC 1738Ca.) passed in

1996 allowing states and directing federal agencies to discriminate against same-sex couples in marriage or legal marriage-like unions (Cahill 2005; Smith 2001)—assimilationists saw them as temporary setbacks that would be redressed as queer communities and activists continued on a path of convergence with the liberal and centrist models of family change that were generally if not consistently successful in the political arena.

Through the first two or three years of the new millennium, it was possible to distinguish extreme social conservatives from centrists (see Benokraitis 2000). Today, that distinction is less clear, as conservatives and centrists share the conviction that expanding marital rights to non-heterosexuals somehow cheapens the value of marriage and undermines some of the family's basic functions, including procreation and socialization of children. Moderate social conservatives, for their part, have not been wholly uncomfortable with granting limited recognition, legal rights and privileges to committed same-sex couples in the past. Likewise, because they see strengthening existing heterosexual marriages and promoting the benefits to children of stable marital relationships as keys to repairing the family's damaged reputation in civil society, centrists usually stop short of endorsing full civil marriage for homosexuals. Instead, many (but by no means all) have argued that civil unions are more than adequate for co-resident, committed gay couples whose families will probably not fulfill the procreative and socializing functions traditionally assigned to heterosexual marriage. Moderates also tend to resist the reduction of marriage to an expression of individualism with reminders that marriage is a social contract that defines not only privileges, but responsibilities to the larger society. Marriage, for centrists and moderate conservatives, is reserved for those who would take on the social responsibilities associated with reproducing culture—individuals, families and communities bound together through relatively stable value systems. It should be noted that the moderate conservative position was endorsed by most of the Democratic candidates for president in 2008.

To many opponents of inclusive rights for homosexuals—social and religious conservatives, and a number of public intellectuals who claim to be moderate or centrist—

allowing same-sex marriage heralds the full normalization of queer life in the public sphere, which would come only with the devaluation of heterosexuality and traditional family forms. On the other hand, the suspicion of many gays and lesbians is that accepting same-sex marriage means abandoning the structural critique of heterosexism, queer political commitments to resist gender- and race-based injustice and homophobia, and ultimately the very notion of a “queer” identity or culture, only to surrender to the hegemonic systems of oppression that defined gay and lesbian political existence in the first place. In each case, the danger is the end of difference, with the questionable promise of a politically secure and socially unremarkable—dare I say *quotidian*—existence for lesbians, gays, and their families. Opponents of same-sex marriage on both ends of the ideological continuum cast integration and assimilation of gay and lesbian people into family life as a threat to the family, a kind of evil masquerading as “normal.” But queer lives *are* normal, and not so different from the lives of others where marriage and family are concerned.

#### Pictures from a Normal Life

Until we get married, or enter into a permanent, long-term committed relationship, we all share a common personal history marked by repeated failures—perhaps because of a nagging sense of dissatisfaction with the conversation or the sex, the discovery of infidelity, an episode of violence, a feeling of dismay over the possibility of having to look at his or her face every morning for the rest of your life, or a sudden jolting insight that the person sitting across the table from you is just not “the one.” This is *normal* for everyone. Everyone has a story, an account of his or her own personal quest for a quotidian existence that illustrates how *utterly pedestrian* the desire for love, or the secret wish for marriage, can be.

It was 2003. My mother was visiting Las Vegas from the small Texas town where I grew up, and was unaccustomed to shelling out more than \$100 for dinner for three. I wanted her to meet the man I had been seeing for several months—Jay, the dashing local attorney with the exceptionally sweet smile who had only come out last year—so she was taking us out. I

was his first “official boyfriend,” and he often told me he felt lucky that he met me right out of the gate. Smartly outfitted in black, he joined us at an Italian restaurant at one of the local casinos. As I introduced him to my mom, I felt lucky, too.

Out of the corner of my eye, I watched him talk animatedly with my mother, who was chuckling at his jokes, and telling a few of her own. For her part, she wore a sort of shrewd smirk most of the evening, sizing up the person I insisted she meet. Her eyes would dart toward me occasionally, and because I am her son, I recognized the tiny lines of reluctant approval that framed her green-eyed gaze. The three of us spent a pleasant hour and a half together, but as I sat there beside him toying with my fork, my excitement about the evening slowly and inexplicably dissipated. I just could not shake a growing feeling that something was wrong with this picture. I had met his parents a few weeks prior, he and my son had gotten along famously once I got them together, and here I was introducing him to my mother. This is how it is supposed to happen, is it not? Date for a while, meet the parents, then...what? Why was this so uncomfortable? I found myself fidgeting, and looking at my watch.

After dinner, I steered my mother toward a bank of nickel slot machines, and asked Jay to walk with me for a coffee at the kiosk down the way. I do not remember if we said anything important during that short stroll, except that he probably said he liked my mother.

“Listen,” I started, after we got our coffee. “I don’t know where this is going. I do know that I ...” I brought my cup up to my face, taking a deep breath, pretending to appreciate the aroma wafting from it. “I want something more. We need to graduate...to something else, or we need to stop this.” I looked up and held his eyes, held that breath, the expectant puff of air that was all the hope I had in me.

His face relaxed. I had not even noticed that it was tense.

“I’m so relieved,” he began, through a sincere grin and an explosive sigh. He’d been holding his breath, too, apparently. “I didn’t know how to tell you.”



I tightened my lips and blinked once, slowly, and lowered my eyes. I needed two seconds to stare pointlessly at the tile floor. “Okay,” I said jovially, brightly pushing my best face forward, “It’s over, then.”

There was no anger, no drama. For about fifteen minutes, Jay and I cordially discussed why we could not and would not become more than we were. We said the usual things, reminisced fondly about the usual memories—the hot tub, the time I had too much port, the excellent Valentine’s Day date, the weekend we spent in the Texas Hill Country attending my best friend’s wedding—and made the usual excuses. Although we had planned that night to return with my mother to my place after dinner so I could give him the tour of my new house, we agreed that it might be awkward and somewhat sad. With a brief hug, already distant, and a whispered goodbye, I left him at the coffee counter, and grabbed my mother on the way out.

“Where is Jay?” She asked, as I pulled her away from “Sizzlin’ Sevens,” her favorite lucky machine.

“He’s not coming,” I said neutrally, trudging purposefully toward the exit. Without speaking, I led her along the rows of slot machines—the synthesized bells and electronic chords mockingly urging players like me to take just one more shot—and out into the dimly-lit parking lot. I had hidden my disappointment well enough from him, but I could not hide it from her. I opened the passenger door of my truck, and as she eased herself into her seat, my mother found her voice.

“If I had known you were going to break up with him,” she said, just a little too wisely as she pulled the door closed, “we would have eaten at McDonald’s.”

It did not occur to me until later that this experience was not at all special or unusual. My mother, having accepted my identity, simply acknowledged my romantic interest and signaled her willingness to participate in clearing the path toward a more or less permanent and durable family life for me. She would have done, and has done, as much for any of my heterosexual siblings. This is traditionally what families do, but until very recently, lesbian

and gay people could expect neither acceptance nor support from their families, much less for their desire to find a partner with whom to share a life.

Times are changing. As part of an effort to understand that change, this research provides an empirical account of the cultural shift within the non-heterosexual population toward assimilationist ideology marked by the sustained public discourse and concern about the political possibility of a “red letter day”—the day when homosexuals have the unrestricted right to marry in American society.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE LEGAL LANDSCAPE: SODOMY, PRIVACY, AND THE RIGHT TO MARRY

*Identity politics is permeated by ambivalence. We are members of the dominant society and yet we are not really members. This contradiction is our fate. We face a constant challenge to develop a political strategy that nourishes and protects the many ways of being homosexual. It may be easy to recognize what is inauthentic in this twilight zone of ambivalence and contradiction, but slowly it dawns on us that there may be no “authentic” solution at all. (Escoffier 1998:28-29)*

As of this writing, a few people have seen dawn of that red-letter day—the day when gays and lesbians can legally marry—in a small number of states, including Connecticut in 2008 and most notably Massachusetts, where same-sex marriage has been legal since 2003. The November 2003 ruling of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court that forbade the state from excluding same-sex couples from the institution of civil marriage was a watershed event marking the beginning of a new and more vociferous round of public and scholarly debates about not just marriage, but the family more generally. In *Goodridge v. Department of Health* (798 N.E.2d 941 [2003]), the Massachusetts high court at once affirmed the traditional value of marriage as a “vital social institution” while expanding its practical definition:

The exclusive commitment of two individuals to each other nurtures love and mutual support; it brings stability to our society. For those who choose to marry, and for their children, marriage provides an abundance of legal, financial, and social benefits. In return it imposes weighty legal, financial,

and social obligations. The question before us is whether, consistent with the Massachusetts Constitution, the Commonwealth may deny the protections, benefits, and obligations conferred by civil marriage to two individuals of the same sex who wish to marry. We conclude that it may not.

Massachusetts was not the only state on the east coast whose high court was grappling with the same-sex marriage issue. Prior to the *Goodridge* decision that granted marriage to gays and lesbians in Massachusetts, Vermont in 2002 legalized civil unions, and was the first state to create a legal relationship status similar to marriage for non-heterosexuals. In *Baker v. Vermont* (744 A.2d 864 [1999]), justices in Vermont ultimately found that the state's marriage laws discriminated against gays and lesbians. The Court ordered the state legislature to correct the problem. In 2000, then-governor Howard Dean signed into law legislation that created in Vermont a separate-but-equal provision for recognizing same-sex relationships in the form of "civil unions," legally equivalent to marriage in all but name.

Connecticut, New Jersey and New Hampshire soon followed their neighbor's example. California, Hawaii, Maine, Oregon, and Washington all moved steadily toward broadening the rights and responsibilities afforded people in domestic partnerships, bringing such relationships closer to marriage but stopping short of making them equal to marriage. These new civil unions and formalized domestic partnerships would gain even further protection when in *Lawrence v. Texas* (539 U.S. 558 [2003]) the United States Supreme Court narrowly struck down so-called "sodomy laws" across the country that prohibited sexual activities between people of the same sex in private. In striking down Section 21.06 of the Texas Criminal Code, the Court also overturned its long-standing ruling in *Bowers v. Hardwick* (478 U.S. 186 [1986]), and established a right to privacy for same-sex relationships.

In the earlier ruling in *Bowers*, the Court sidestepped the issue of privacy (Struening 1996) and ruled instead based on an assumption that there is no fundamental right to practice sodomy, and therefore the state (in that case, Georgia) need not acknowledge nor protect such a right (Ruskola 2005). The *Lawrence* decision, however, seems to recognize that

sodomy laws had traditionally been used to reduce categorically the intimate interactions between people of the same sex to deviant sexual encounters that readily fall outside the realm of legitimate, intimate relationships. The Supreme Court found that sodomy laws exist to further no compelling state interest beyond sanctioning discrimination and justifying harassment by authorities, practices which impinge on a right to privacy established in several other cases in family-related law. With sodomy laws in place, the committed, long-term romantic relationships of gays and lesbians could not possibly be interpreted as similar to marriage, nor could the households created by these unions be fully acknowledged as families.

#### Privacy Protections for Non-heterosexuals

The decision in the *Lawrence* opinion, penned by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, opened new possibilities for alternative families by sweeping away the criminalization of same-sex relationships. Not unexpectedly, a collective gasp of horror from various discontented segments of the population mobilized against same-sex marriage—or gay and lesbian civil rights more generally—punctuated the celebratory mood among lesbian and gay citizens who suddenly found themselves with a long anticipated right to privacy (Hohengarten 1994). The meaning of this gasp was articulated by Justice Antonin Scalia in his dissent from the majority in *Lawrence*:

Today's opinion is the product of a Court, which is the product of a law profession culture that has largely signed on to the so-called homosexual agenda, by which I mean the agenda promoted by some homosexual activists directed at eliminating the moral opprobrium that has traditionally attached to homosexual conduct. I noted in an earlier opinion the fact that the American Association of Law Schools (which any reputable law school must seek to belong) excludes from membership any school that refuses to ban from its job-interview facilities a law firm (no matter how small) that does

not wish to hire as a prospective partner a person who openly engages in homosexual conduct. (*Lawrence v. Texas* 2003, Antonin Scalia, dissenting)

Scalia's strident criticism of the majority opinion focuses mainly on the idea that the Court has abandoned traditionally-sound jurisprudence by finding rights where they do not exist, and that it ignores the will of the citizenry and lessons of tradition in capitulation to what we might call a "rights industry." Scalia's criticism of both his colleagues and the Court's decision-making process is abrasive, and not atypical of his tendency to sensationalize and politicize Supreme Court decisions. "Justice Scalia's twenty years on the Court have been marked by a harsh rhetoric that damages the reputation of the Court as a vital institution in American society," writes legal scholar Stephen Newman, "and that encourages and contributes to the 'judge-bashing' political agenda of the far right-wing of the Republican Party" (Newman 2006/2007:914). Scalia's dissent is less likely a benign registration of contrary legal reasoning than a pre-emptive political strike against social movements toward marriage and other human rights for lesbians and gays. Indeed, in his *Lawrence* dissent, Scalia "wildly predicted the judicial invalidation of laws against prostitution, bigamy, bestiality, adult incest, and same-sex marriage" (Newman 2006/2007:918), invoking the right-wing stereotypes that connect homosexuality to criminal deviance and sexual perversion.

As public attention shifted uneasily toward the prospect of queer weddings, calls for new political responses were heard and new policies formulated. The most divisive of these was a proposed Federal Marriage Amendment that would constitutionally define marriage in the United States as between one man and one woman, and—despite proponents' claims to the contrary—undermine any alternative union that might confer substantively similar rights upon same-sex couples. A majority of states have already amended their own state constitutions in this way, but a federal amendment, if passed, would have destroyed the rights and privileges already afforded to married same-sex couples, and couples in civil unions, in the various states that recognize the family-making rights of non-heterosexuals. This is precisely what the California Supreme Court will address in 2009, after the passage

of Proposition 8 called into question the validity of existing same-sex marriages performed legally in that state. The Federal Marriage Amendment failed to make it out of Congress in 2004, but the threat it poses is by no means dead.

## Political Backlash Against Expansion of Civil

### Rights of Gays and Lesbians

The reactions of legislators, lobbyists and some jurists to the possibility of same-sex marriage across the United States over the past fifteen years testifies to both the enormous mobilizing power of homophobia among anti-gay forces and to the authentic momentum of the movement to secure family rights for those to whom they have been denied. The tremendous pressure on government entities to act on behalf of marriage—one way or another—represents a significant change in political opportunity structure, understood as “a set of clues for when contentious politics will emerge, setting in motion a chain of causation that may ultimately lead to sustained interaction with authorities and thence to social movements” (Tarrow 1998:20). The expansion of the definition of marriage by court order or legislation in at least two states would normally signal optimistic political opportunities for factions supporting structural change in the family institution across the nation. Tarrow might characterize the renewed urgency in the family debates as a recent iteration of an historically normative cycle of protest that has given way to a cycle of reform. Indeed, given the *Baehr v. Lewin* (74 Haw. 645, 852 P.2d 44 [1993]), *Lawrence* and *Goodridge* decisions, it would appear that there is a sustainable vitality in debates over whether public policies should recognize and support families as they ought to be or families as they are.

It is the turn toward reform and the ferociously rapid political resistance to inclusion that requires closer scrutiny of the people and populations that struggle for equality. They struggle not just against the tyrannical exercise of power by a heterosexual and too often homophobic majority, but also against the stereotypes and cultural narratives that have painted gays, lesbians and bisexuals as deviant and “anti-family,” in the traditional sense. In

1993—the same year that the *Baehr* was argued in Hawaii—Bruce Bawer described how “professional opponents of homosexuality” had unleashed a misleading, inaccurate and dehumanizing lexicon into public discourses on homosexuality, gay rights and same-sex marriage in order to undermine the legitimacy of civil rights claims from queer activists and solidify in the minds of a heterosexual public largely ignorant of what being gay, lesbian or bisexual actually means that non-heterosexuals constituted a social, political and sometimes even criminal threat to American society. Today, opponents to same-sex marriage draw upon that same lexicon, strengthened by thirty years of Christian fundamentalist intolerance, at least eight years of which have been more or less sanctioned by social conservatives, a reactionary Republican majority in the US Congress, and a president who has claimed he was called to serve by God himself. The result has been an administration committed to “orchestrating a political backlash against gay people in general, targeting lesbian and gay parenting, more limited forms of partner recognition such as domestic partnership, health research, and school anti-homophobia initiatives” (Cahill 2005:171) under the auspices of movements promoting fatherhood and marriage as goals for policy rather than people.

*The “Homosexual Agenda”: Panics, Parties  
and Professional Homophobes*

The most persistent and ubiquitous concept named in that lexicon is the so-called “homosexual agenda,” which has gained purchase as marriage rights have moved into the realm of political possibility for same-sex couples. The concept has remained virtually unchanged, however, from Bawer’s description:

Homophobes like to argue that gay-rights supporters have an “agenda.” It’s one of those words that politicians use in campaigns. They have a “cause”; their opponents have an “agenda.” The word makes it sound as if you’re at war with shady characters who have a sinister secret plan. (Bawer 1993:147)

With his dissent in *Lawrence*, Justice Scalia arguably became the first professional homophobe to serve openly on the United States Supreme Court. In legitimizing the



mythical idea of a “homosexual agenda” (which in lay discourse is interpreted as “anti-family”) and suggesting that the court system has been corrupted (which translates into a judiciary full of so-called “activist judges”), Scalia lays the groundwork in his Lawrence dissent for reframing legal, scholarly and policy debates over the future of marriage and the family: a moral panic.

Sociologists have defined moral panics as “a widespread feeling on the part of the public or some relevant public that something is terribly wrong in society because of the moral failure of a specific group of individuals” (Schneider and Jenness 1997:473; see also Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). Successfully reframing the debate over same-sex marriage requires creating enough fear to sustain a moral panic until it can be resolved either through the courts or legislative process. David Altheide studies the role of media messages in the creation of fear. “A story about fear is produced and packaged in a process that formulates social complexities as simplistic problems,” writes Altheide, “The cumulative effect is to produce a discourse of fear that then becomes a resource on which the audience may draw when interpreting subsequent reports” (2000:49). While it is true that a discourse of fear surrounding homosexuals existed prior to the Lawrence decision among some conservative groups, Christian and other religious groups, and a number of communities, Scalia’s scathing dissent provided a rhetorical anchor in case law for the emergence of a more unified movement against same-sex marriage that proceeds from what Altheide calls a “problem frame,” the logic of which is clearly evident in Scalia’s dissent:

- Something exists that is undesirable.
- Many people are affected by this problem (it is relevant).
- Unambiguous aspects or parts are easily identified.
- It can be changed or “fixed.”
- There is a mechanism or procedure for fixing the problem.
- The change or repair agent and process is known (usually the government). (Altheide 2000:49)

The problem frame is hardly the exclusive tool of opponents of same-sex marriage, however. Once the frame appears, it comes to dominate as the organizing logic of political discourse and social movements. The *Goodridge* decision begins, “Marriage is a vital social institution,” something on which there is more or less consensus across political and social lines in this country. But agreement ends there. In *Lawrence*, the “something” that is undesirable is homosexuality for Scalia and his political cohorts, while it is civil inequality for the justices of the Massachusetts high court. The people affected by the problem are heterosexual, “normal” people assumed to be in the majority on one hand, and a sexual minority with relatively little power on the other. The problem is unambiguously *behavior* for one camp, *structure* for the other. Homosexuality as a problem can be “fixed” by continuing to systematically stigmatize the people who practice it as immoral or deviant. Inequality, on the other hand, can be “fixed” by changing the structure of the social institutions that exclude such people. One party might argue that the mechanism for fixing this problem lies in legislation driven by majority interests, a sort of gross democracy, and non-interference by a meddling judiciary. Another party might interpret the solution to the problem to be the exercise of the judicial mandate to interpret the law in the interests of its marginalized citizens and occasionally against the interests of an overzealous majority or hostile legislature.

Essentially, in *Lawrence*, Scalia successfully preempted the *Goodridge* decision of the justices on the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court by initiating a moral panic over homosexuality and same-sex marriage among social conservatives and moderates alike. By the time the Massachusetts court ruled in favor of allowing same-sex marriage some six months after *Lawrence*, their ruling was immediately interpreted as evidence of Scalia’s charges of the “anti-family” nature of the “homosexual agenda.” The Massachusetts justices were portrayed as “activist judges” forcing a new form of marriage on an unwilling population. By that time, same-sex marriage was already seen by many as a real and present threat to the fabric of the American family.

According to Bawer, the “homosexual agenda” is right-wing code for a list of biases that justify a virulent form of heterosexism and animate the fearful stereotype of the homosexual deviant out to undermine “the family” by promoting homosexuality as normal and “equivalent” to heterosexuality; by denouncing the civic responsibilities attached to heterosexuality in favor of an “unnatural,” hedonistic, individualistic, and self-indulgent “lifestyle”; by “recruiting” young people to “choose” to adopt this “lifestyle,” the “practices” and “behaviors” of which are judged to be antithetical to traditional or mostly Christian “values”; by “politicizing” sexuality and “endorsing” policies that would grant “special rights” to homosexuals, and accord a place of “special privilege” to homosexuality and gay culture; and of course, to create “special protections” for lesbians and gays (see Bawer 1993: 140-152 for detailed discussion), such as hate crime laws, which generally mandate stiffer punishment for individuals who single out victims based on racial or sexual prejudices.

*The Radical Christian Threat: Discrimination  
or Death, Not Marriage*

By 2008, religious leaders had effectively translated this last item on the “agenda” to mean that granting equal rights to gays is tantamount to restricting religious freedom and abrogating First Amendment rights. In short, they are worried that they will not be able to denounce homosexuality or condemn lesbian and gay people from the pulpit. Anti-gay pastors argue that law enforcement might, sometime in the future, take it seriously when a church leader publicly—and sometimes laughingly—calls for violence against homosexuals, up to and including their extermination at the hands of homophobic bigots or misguided “Christian soldiers” such as Joel’s Army (Sanchez 2008), or the murderous Watchmen on the Walls (Sanchez 2007).

Most Christian gay-baiting is based on biblical verses in the book of Leviticus, specifically “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (Lev.18:22), and “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon

them” (Lev. 20:13). Many individuals and religious organizations interpret these verses literally. In 2001, for example, Larry Kilgore told a reporter covering an anti-gay protest, “We know punishing homosexuals by death would be extremely hard in today’s society, but we hope we can drive it [homosexuality] underground so that in about twenty or thirty years, the punishment will fit the crime” (Lum 2001). Kilgore and other local members of the Constitution Party in Dallas advocating Texas’ HB 496, a state-level defense of marriage bill, expressed more patience with regard to killing homosexuals than does small-time online evangelist Jim Rudd.

Rudd is upset that American politicians will not adhere to biblical principles and carry out God’s justice on lesbians and gays. In an article on his website entitled “Put Homosexuals to the Sword,” Rudd (2006) echoed a somewhat widespread Christian reconstructionist claim that “civil officials have a God ordained duty to execute sodomites,” and included a set of “preaching points” that presumably help pastors make the case that state-sanctioned execution of gays and lesbians is a morally appropriate expression of God’s love. Rudd’s opinion of homosexuals reflects a prejudice that just will not die, and one that appears on various websites from time to time. The following is from a blog entry by a man named Matthew Stucky, dated December 16, 2008, who calls the mythical Santa Claus “satanic,” and accuses the eight reindeer in his employ of being “queer” bullies who harass Rudolph, the only “straight” reindeer at the North Pole:

According to the Bible homosexuality should be punishable by death. I would be overjoyed if every single queer in the entire world died today. The Bible makes it clear they are reprobates who are past the point of salvation. The Bible also makes it clear they are rapists & very wicked people. They have no chance to get saved and no saved person could ever become a queer. Therefore, I would be overjoyed if they all died tonight & our government would actually follow what the Bible states. The death penalty should be enacted for the queers. (Stucky 2008)

The silly pop cultural analysis aside, the author makes his views about homosexuality and gay people clear as ice, right after quoting Leviticus. Such is the message from religious homophobes, both professional and amateur: Death, not marriage, is the proper response of the government to demands for lesbian and gay family equality. If not death, then institutionalized discrimination will have to do.

### Marriage Rights and Family Rights:

#### Federalism and Discrimination

In 2005, the year this study was first conceived and the year after George W. Bush was re-elected to presidency after pledging his support to efforts to amend the US Constitution to exclude same-sex couples from marriage (Liu and Macedo 2005), Kansas and Texas passed constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage, joining 17 other states that had already taken similar steps to deny legal marriage to gays and lesbians under the guise of protecting “traditional marriage,” including Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon and Utah. By the end of the following year, Alabama, Colorado, Idaho, South Dakota, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin had followed suit. Arizona voters that year rejected the proposal to limit legal marriage to one man and one woman, and Arizona remains the only state that resisted writing injustice and inequality into its constitution. That resistance would crumble in November 2008, when Arizona, Florida and California voters passed constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage.

The passage of California’s Proposition 8 in the 2008 election banned same-sex marriage in California, and marked a major setback for the expansion of marriage rights to non-heterosexuals. In 1999, California’s domestic partnership law was already the most broadly inclusive in the country, and in early 2008, that state’s Supreme Court ruled that lesbian and gay people had a constitutional right to form families:

...we conclude that, under this state's Constitution, the constitutionally based right to marry properly must be understood to encompass the core set of basic substantive legal rights and attributes traditionally associated with marriage that are so integral to an individual's liberty and personal autonomy that they may not be eliminated or abrogated by the Legislature or by the electorate through the statutory initiative process. These core substantive rights include, most fundamentally, the opportunity of an individual to establish — with the person with whom the individual has chosen to share his or her life — an officially recognized and protected family possessing mutual rights and responsibilities and entitled to the same respect and dignity accorded a union traditionally designated as marriage. (*Re: Marriage Cases*, 43 Cal.4th 757 [2008])

The language of the Court's opinion is unprecedented and clear: Denying same-sex couples the right to marry violates the "fundamental right to form a family relationship." After the ruling was announced, religious and anti-gay rights groups organized the ballot initiative to circumvent the ruling of the court by amending the state constitution to exclude same-sex couples from marriage, and as of this writing, the effort has been successful.

Bankrolled largely by religious and conservative political organizations that exploited anti-gay prejudices by rolling out the worst stereotypes and fears embedded in the "homosexual agenda" (gays threaten children, gays are diseased, gays are incapable of monogamy, etc.), Proposition 8 passed by a narrow margin, setting off weeks of protests both in California and across the country. By the end of 2008, anti-gay forces were celebrating a "mission accomplished": Laws either banning same-sex marriage or specifically defining marriage as a union of one man and one woman are now on the books in more than 40 states, a "success" largely attributable to the effective use of the "homosexual agenda" as a problem frame. Before the end of 2008, so-called "pro-family" groups were calling for the nullification of more than 18,000 same-sex marriages performed legally under

the California Supreme Court's ruling, arguing that if the state from recognizing same-sex marriage, then no same-sex marriage could be treated as legal, regardless of when it was formed (Associated Press 2008). This and other controversies surrounding the ballot initiative will be addressed by the California Supreme Court in 2009, but at this time remain unresolved. A more thorough discussion of the significance of and reaction to the passage of Proposition 8 is beyond the scope of this project, but at a minimum, the election results in 2008 put to rest any presumption that the culture wars had been won, or that hostilities between religious conservatives and gay activists had ceased.

The claim that homosexuals have a so-called "agenda" driven by "anti-family" values has not been adequately addressed by researchers, except perhaps by researchers examining the effects of same-sex parenting on children's outcomes (see Stacey and Biblarz 2000) or the history of the gay rights movement (Bernstein 2002; Fetner 2001; Smith 2001; Eskridge 1993). The prejudices perpetuated by the anti-gay crowd in the name of fighting the "homosexual agenda" are politically motivated caricatures, unlikely to reflect with any accuracy the values, beliefs, desires, or experiences of non-heterosexual people in the family system. While the propagandist rhetoric of the "homosexual agenda" is hurtful to all members of the non-heterosexual community, it is especially damaging to the segment of the non-heterosexual population that most wants to be able to marry and form families. Indeed, given that many same-sex headed households include children, these families already exist. The "homosexual agenda" provides a skeletal structure on which hangs the slick and scary skin of homophobia; it is a sort of political zombie, a living-dead narrative designed to play on the fears of the ignorant, and nothing more. It ignores the voices and the lives of non-heterosexuals themselves, and focuses its attention on gays and lesbians as mythical monsters driven by a desire to conquer rather than conform. This is not reality. A more robust picture of contemporary and changing "queer culture" must include a meaningful, empirical description of the family practices, institutionalized support systems and social

networks that sustain everyday life for gay, lesbian and bisexual people in US society.

Caricatures no longer suffice.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### PORTRAIT OF A QUEER PEOPLE

Until very recently—and in only a few states and countries—lesbian and gay people realized early in their lives that marriage was simply not an option, conceptually or practically, without subordinating or denying one’s sexual identity. In the parks and primary school playgrounds where children first begin to learn public gender and sexual identities, who among us has not teased or been teased by playmates chanting, giggling and in unison, the seminal cultural lesson that marriage is both natural and inevitable?

*Rhonda and Charlie,  
sittin’ in a tree,  
K-I-S-S-I-N-G.  
First comes love, then comes marriage,  
then comes Rhonda with a baby carriage!*

The sing-song rhyme and rhythm of the childish limerick hides the powerful magic of the marriage message: that you will meet and fall in love with someone of a different sex, eventually get married, have sex, and have children, and that is how it is supposed to be. For some children, the social spell is of a darker, melancholy variety. Only later in their lives, when Rhonda finds herself hoping Charlie is a girl, and Charlie secretly wishes Rhonda were really Ronnie, does it become clear that the promise of love, happiness and order evoked in the old playground cantrip is wrapped in isolation and exclusion; it is an illusion, unattainable to those of us who are not heterosexual. Thus do so many gay and lesbian people grow up and grow into a world we understand through what Jonathan Rauch calls a “weird prism of marriagelessness” (2004:3).

In a short passage at the beginning of his book, Rauch recalls a day from his childhood when he became aware not of his sexual identity, but of the impossibility of his marriage. “As I sat on the piano bench in the family room,” he writes, “it dawned on me that I would never be married.... That day was a long time, I think about fifteen years, before I understood that I was homosexual” (2004:3). The idea of “being married” at some point in one’s life is pervasive, and certainly all of us are socialized as children to believe that marriage ultimately will define us as real, as significant and of course as immutably heterosexual. Another advocate of same-sex marriage, Evan Wolfson, describes a similar epiphany in his youth, when he realized “there was something in the picture society showed me that I didn’t fit into, before I could tell my mom or even fully understand that I was gay”:

One night—I couldn’t have been more than eleven or twelve—my mother and I were watching something on TV and talking. Dad was out on his weekly bowling night and the other kids must have already gone off to sleep. I remember saying to my mom, in what must have seemed an out-of-the-blue declaration, “I don’t think I’ll get married.” I don’t remember if, or how, my mom responded. But I do remember that I realized I might be excluded from the joys of married life. (Wolfson 2004:15-16)

In the meditative epilogue in *Virtually Normal*, gay same-sex marriage advocate Andrew Sullivan addresses that sense of exclusion more expansively, suggesting that by adolescence, “Heterosexual marriage is perceived as the primary emotional goal for your peers; and yet you know this cannot be your fate. It terrifies and alarms you. While its form comforts, its content appalls. It requires a systematic dishonesty; and this dishonesty either is programmed into your soul and so warps your integrity, or is rejected in favor of—what? You scan your mind for an alternative” (1996:190).

For those who might grow up to be gay or lesbian, this “prism of marriagelessness” bends perception like any other, and it is through this prism that gay subcultures and sexual countercultures begin to look orderly and meaningful without marriage, as indeed they

are as alternatives to an exclusionary heterosexist culture. It is also through the prism of marriagelessness that opponents of social and legal equality view the lives of lesbians, gays and their families. Because of the lack of institutional and social support, the unavailability of the stabilizing influence of marriage, and the stigma attached to same-sex relationships and families, it might be relatively difficult for gay and lesbian couples, compared to their straight peers, to see themselves in marriage, or to hold positive attitudes toward the institution. Despite these difficulties, it is clear that lesbians and gays do in fact form relationships and families (see Lewin 1998). For most, the only marriage-like option for family-building is cohabitation, considered by many a less-than-optimum alternative to state-sanctioned marriage, at least for heterosexuals (see detailed discussion in Waite and Gallagher 2000). Even where same-sex civil unions are available to same-sex couples, there is at least some evidence that such laws do not protect gay and lesbian families from discrimination (Faiola 2007). Still, many same-sex committed relationships mirror marriage insofar as they are monogamous, feature long-term commitment, often include children and are a source of security and satisfaction (Lehmiller and Agnew 2006; Peplau and Beals 2004; Worth, Reid and McMillan 2002).

My analysis begins with a basic assumption about homosexuals themselves: "They exist" (see Rauch 2004), objectively and legitimately. In this research, I take at face value the structure and character of same-sex relationships as they are, right now, as they are encountered in the field, recognizing that gay and lesbian communities are products of a unique and emergent culture (Weston 1991). By assuming non-heterosexual identity and existence is at once authentic and normal, I can also make assumptions about individuals in same-sex relationships that have long been made about heterosexuals. For example, it is common sense to assume that people who are married will generally be supportive of marriage as an institution (although the variability of that support is being studied). Making the same assumption about homosexuals is slightly problematic, but can still be expressed:

that gays and lesbians in committed, cohabitational relationships are more likely to be supportive of marriage.

Just because many homosexuals have experienced a moment in their lives in which they realized that being gay meant not getting or being married does not mean that non-heterosexual people choose a way of life built in opposition to the values associated with matrimony—love, companionship, sexual exclusivity, etc. Indeed, that finding a partner and building a life together continues to be an observable pattern among lesbians and gay men suggests that the ideology of marriage—even in the absence of its possibility—is as deeply embedded in gays and queer culture as it is in straight people and the dominant heterosexual culture.

#### *Quest for Quotidian: An American Sample*

This study relies on a final national sample of 466 adult men and women representing thirty-seven states across the country. Census data show that gay and lesbian residents could be found in 99.3 percent of all counties in the United States in 2000, compared to only about 52 percent of counties in 1990, although the increase likely reflects a significant undercount of gay and lesbian households in 1990 as well as increased willingness of gays and lesbians to identify themselves as partners in a same-sex relationship (Smith and Gates 2001). *Quest for Quotidian* respondents are clustered in metropolitan areas across the various regions of the United States, with the heaviest concentrations in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Portland, Tucson and New York, a modest reflection of the geographic concentration of lesbians and gays observed by researchers analyzing larger national data sources (Black et al. 2000). Most respondents live in urban or suburban areas, while a smaller proportion, 16.3 percent, reported that they live in small towns or “out in the country,” in more rural settings relatively removed from urban life.

In this sample, fewer than one in five respondents live outside of cities or metropolitan areas, and younger respondents are more likely than older respondents to live in rural

settings. About 30 percent of all respondents age 18 to 24 ( $n=108$ ) live in rural areas, compared to 12 percent of respondents age 25 to 49 ( $n=300$ ). Among respondents age 50 and over ( $n=54$ ), the proportion of rural to urban living is approximately 17 percent. That most non-heterosexual people tend to live in urban areas (Black et al. 2000) might be explained by a higher expectation of anonymity in urban settings, more opportunities to meet and interact with a wider variety of friends and partners who are also non-heterosexual, and perhaps more safe spaces for self- and sexual expression (Aldrich 2004). The presence of non-heterosexuals in almost all US communities, however, suggests at least the possibility that same-sex couples or gay families are already present as part of the larger family systems within those communities, and are not so “queer” at all (Stacey 1996:107).

It is possible that many of the young adults in small towns or rural areas who responded to this survey have not yet acquired the resources or motivation to leave the hometowns of their childhood or adolescence for the more urbane milieu of the college or university campus, or the cosmopolitan intensity of the “big city (see Rushbrook 2002) Small towns do not remain small because of “queer flight”—lesbians and gays lighting out for more friendly territories—but because the local economies and opportunity structures are limited for *everyone*, including straights, who themselves often choose to seek opportunities outside rural America, in the cities and urban centers that are the economic and cultural hotspots in US society. It is too easy to argue simply that being gay is difficult in small towns. For many, it might be more difficult to be financially or professionally successful *and* gay or lesbian in small towns.

Non-heterosexuals living in rural areas are probably underrepresented in this sample because of sampling techniques and the method by which the survey was delivered. It is reasonable to assume that gay, lesbian or bisexual individuals living outside cities have smaller “queer networks,” and this, coupled with potential problems with internet access might mean people in rural areas were less likely to be invited to the survey by a friend or someone they know. Even if individuals were successfully recruited, the web-based questionnaire may have

been too time-intensive or demanding for some individuals with dial-up or slower internet connections. Rural area residents might not have ready access to the internet at home or at all, which would have further reduced their chances of being recruited and perhaps even eliminated any possibility of completing the online survey.

Approximately 41 percent ( $n=190$ ) of all respondents hail from the Western region of the US, including Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Respondents from the American South—Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia—make up about 27 percent of the final sample ( $n=128$ ). Nineteen percent of the sample ( $n=87$ ) come from the Northeast region of the United States—Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and the District of Columbia. The Midwest is the most weakly represented region in the sample. Only 13 percent of respondents ( $n=61$ ) reside in states like Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio and Wisconsin.

More than 85 percent ( $n=397$ ) of all *Quest for Quotidian* respondents reported their race and ethnic identity as “White, Non-Hispanic.” Self-identified “mixed race” respondents are the second largest racial group in the sample at 6.9 percent, while the number of respondents who identified themselves as “Black/African American,” “Asian/Pacific Islander” or “Native American/Native Alaskan” combined comprises less than three percent of the total sample. People who claim Hispanic ethnicity account for 5.6 percent of the total sample. Among these, more than half are “White, Hispanic,” while yet another quarter claim a bi- or multiracial Hispanic identity.

On average, the women and men in the sample have lived in their communities for about ten years, and one in four has called his or her neighborhood home for at least five years. They serve as public school teachers and administrators, office workers and managers, doctors and nurses, retail sales associates, pastors, accountants, writers, actors, college professors,

police officers and firefighters, librarians, real estate agents, musicians, veterinarians, computer programmers, market analysts, video game designers, airline pilots and flight attendants, CEOs and CFOs, lawyers and paralegals, lobbyists and politicians, chefs and food servers, architects, stay-at-home dads and moms, and yes, hairdressers and florists. Only one thing seems to make their lives less quotidian than anyone else's.

*They are not heterosexual.*

### Gender: Bodies and Performance

Physical sexual characteristics and gendered displays determine the social and behavioral expectations of others, and strongly influence how those others approach and interact with individuals. Respondents were asked to indicate their biological sex, which was unproblematic (female,  $n=231$ ; male,  $n=233$ ; intersex,  $n=2$ ). A second question—“What is your gender identity? In other words, how would you say you live your life in the day-to-day?”—was used to capture the gender performance strategy respondents used to fit into a social world constructed fundamentally around a dichotomous, “either/or” gender ideology, to determine how they “passed” in everyday interaction. Only a small minority ( $n=26$ ) reported a gender identity different from that traditionally associated with their biological sex. For the overwhelming majority of respondents, biological sex and gender identity were one and the same thing (women,  $n=214$ ; men,  $n=226$ ).

Initially, response categories were limited to “as a woman” and “as a man,” but early in the data collection phase I noted that some respondents were skipping that question in what appeared to be a systematic way. I also received emails from respondents who were unhappy about their responses being “forced” into one or another category of what they considered a false binary. In response to these concerns, I added an “other” category and allowed respondents to self-define their gender performance in an adjacent textbox. Notably, those few individuals who reported gender identity as “other” than as a man or woman were

without exception biologically female ( $n=10$ ). Qualitative explanations from respondents included the following statements:

- “I live as a woman, but am not always comfortable identifying as one; often I prefer to think of myself as neuter.”
- “neuter; sometimes male, sometimes female”
- “I identify with neither, I’m a very masculine looking woman, but still clearly present as a strong woman. But I want to be seen as feminine.”
- “Without particular thought or reference to myself as a gendered entity”
- “transgendered”
- “me”
- “Gender Fuck”
- “genderqueer”
- “still trying to figure this out myself, I’m afraid.”

Statements such as these appear to strongly suggest that these subjects are challenging the *definition* of gender, not reporting how they experience the social world *through* gender. How, for example, does one distinguish between “transgender” and the user-provided category of “neuter?” These terms are neither compatible nor equivalent. Sociologically, gender is never neutral. Despite the claims of “genderqueer” identity, it is unreasonable at this point in history to assume that any of these respondents have been socialized as “transgendered” individuals since childhood; rather, it is likely that adoption of a transgendered identity in adolescence or adulthood is an act of resistance against the hegemonic gender and sexual ideologies in contemporary society, a rejection of childhood socialization and normative pressures to “fit in” to a heterosexist society. Female respondents who defined their gender as “other” were coded as women in the final sample, because they most likely were socialized as women, and as adults are now challenging the gender binary that in their perception constrains them as people who happen to be women.



In recognition that gender is not static or essential, but lived and performed by individuals (Bornstein 1994; Lorber 1994; Butler 1990), respondents who reported a gender identity usually associated with a different sex were assigned to the gender category they used to describe how they live their lives, how they gender themselves (see Dozier 2005). Seven people who identified as male reported performing gender “as a woman,” and seven others identified as female and reported performing gender “as a man.” Both intersexed individuals reported their gender identity as “woman.” In these cases, gender is based on performative strategy rather than physical sexual characteristics. I coded gender to be the same as reported sex—e.g., if sex is female, gender is woman—only when no response was recorded on the gender identity question. Physical sexual characteristics are not always a useful proxy for gender. Some non-heterosexual people challenge the rigidity of sexual categories, because they believe that the socially- and normatively-constructed categories themselves are unstable or oppressive. Put more directly, some individuals do not or cannot see themselves or their bodies in a limited list of sexual or gender identities. For this reason, when no other information about gender identity existed, respondents were assigned to a gender category based on their reported physical or biological sex.

I do not wish to suggest that “transgender” identity is illegitimate or unworthy of scholarly attention, but I do want to point out that it remains conceptually amorphous, difficult to measure, and definitionally unstable outside the discourses of feminist activism, psychology and radical identity politics. Because *Quest for Quotidian* is essentially a study of how values shape the conceptualization of family life for non-heterosexuals, the powerful influence of gender (as a set of norms derived from values) or gender socialization (the process of attaching normative sanctions to the behaviors of sexed bodies) cannot be elided. In the absence of information about how gender is lived or performed in the day to day, I am inclined to follow the assumption in the literature, namely that individuals experience gender socialization on the basis of their physical sex, which would lead to a gender identity that falls within the man/woman binary, however uncomfortable or unsatisfying that identity might

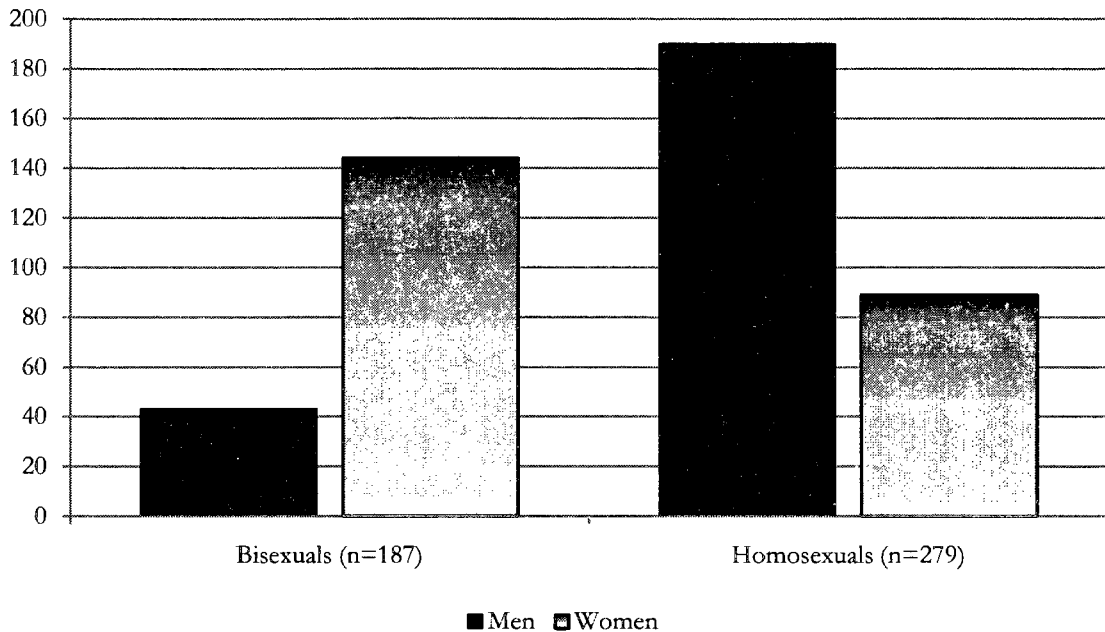
be to individual respondents. At the same time, it is important to acknowledge members of the non-heterosexual population whose gender performance is readily familiar but cannot be assumed to be the direct result of gender socialization. For this reason, I have assigned subjects whose identity conflicts with their physical sex to gender categories based on their affirmative endorsement of a particular gendered social experience.

### Gender and Sexuality: Desire, Identity and Behavior

To participate in *Quest for Quotidian*, respondents had to be non-heterosexual, that is, subjects were required either to claim an available sexual identity (gay, lesbian, bisexual), question his or her commitment to heterosexuality, or redefine heterosexual identity to include sexual behaviors normatively and usually proscribed by heterosexual norms. Unlike the questions regarding gender and sex in the survey, questions about sexuality and sexual identity did not illicit negative feedback from subjects, suggesting that these questions are much less problematic, or perhaps less politically charged within the non-heterosexual population.

For analytical purposes, I divide the final *Quest for Quotidian* sample into two broad categories—homosexuals ( $n=279$ ) and bisexuals ( $n=187$ )—based on self-identification and self-reported behavior. I am aware that use of the term “homosexual” has been criticized in the academic literature since the late 1980s (see Risman and Schwartz 1988), but in this study, “homosexual” most clearly distinguishes self-identified gay and lesbian individuals from bisexual individuals in a sample limited to non-heterosexuals. I further subdivide these categories into “gendered sexual identity,” namely bisexual women, bisexual men, homosexual men and homosexual women. Figure 1 shows the sample in terms of gendered sexual identity, e.g., bisexual man, bisexual woman, gay man, lesbian woman. The largest group in the sample is gay men ( $n=190$ ), followed by bisexual women ( $n=144$ ), lesbian women ( $n=89$ ), and bisexual men ( $n=43$ ). Less than 20 percent of the entire sample is constituted by lesbian women, but the smallest sexual identity group is bisexual men, who

Figure 1. Gendered Sexual Identity, or Sexuality by Gender, N=466



make up only nine percent of the sample. Four out of five men in the study are gay men, but only about one in three women are lesbians.

Survey respondents identified themselves as gay or lesbian ( $n=279$ ), bisexual ( $n=169$ ), straight ( $n=6$ ) and “uncertain or questioning” ( $n=12$ ). For homosexual and bisexual participants, this measure is unproblematic. For the 18 individuals who identified as “straight” or “uncertain,” however, I relied on a second, behavioral question to determine eligibility for participation in the survey. Individuals who identified as “straight” and who also described their adult sexual experience as “exclusively heterosexual” were informed that they were not part of the target population for the study, and were asked to exit the online survey. No such cases exist in the final sample.

Many studies of gay, lesbian and bisexual people rely on behavioral measures alone to determine whether someone is non-heterosexual (Weinrich and Klein 2002; Rust 1999). For instance, asking about the number of sexual partners of the same sex someone has had in the past year might indicate sexual preference or orientation. A ratio calculated by dividing the

number of same-sex sexual partners by the total number of sexual partners a respondent had in a given timeframe might also be effective—albeit potentially inaccurate—at objectively determining sexual orientation. I am not convinced, however, that sexuality is so easily determined by behavior.

For some, sexuality is fluid over the life course, and individuals might claim any number of identities as legitimate expressions of their personal sexuality. For example, the emerging literature on “men who have sex with men” notes that many of these men identify as heterosexual or “straight” (Rust 2002). It is also possible that straight-identified men and women with same-sex attractions express their sexuality outside the organizational, institutional and normative patterns that constitute a “gay” social existence—they are not and perhaps do not wish to be integrated into the gay community. Arguably, these men and women may be more conscious of permeable boundaries between hetero- and homosexual identities, practices and public spaces, much like the hazy boundary described by Chauncey (1995) as existing in New York between heterosexual and homosexual men prior to the organized crackdown on homosexual spaces in the 1950s. Many might argue that these “straight” men and women are objectively bisexual, but such a conclusion is based solely on behavior as opposed to identity.

Because *Quest for Quotidian* is at root a study of meaning—how attitudes shape commitment to social institutions like family or marriage—then how non-heterosexual people identify themselves is relatively more important than how they might “objectively” be defined through behavior, e.g., the frequency of same-sex sexual contact or activity. For example, a woman who comes out several years into her marriage to a man might claim a lesbian identity and describe her adult sexual activities and desires as “mostly heterosexual.” Based on her reported behavior and desire, we might conclude that this subject is bisexual, not homosexual. Doing so, however, ignores the historical narratives of sexual minorities, including the stories of lesbians and gay men who entered heterosexual marriages as a way to avoid rather than embrace a non-heterosexual identity, only to discover later that being in

a heterosexual marriage does not make one “straight,” nor does engaging in heterosexual sex necessarily erase same-sex desire. Notably, too, parenting a child through heterosexual sex does not, by itself, indicate or secure a heterosexual identity.

In the example here, the subject acknowledges her queer identity after several years of marriage. We can presume that most of her sexual activity has occurred within the context of her heterosexual marriage so it should not be surprising that she reports her sexual experience to be mostly heterosexual. In fact, it is likely that many (if not most) non-heterosexual people find it impossible to describe their sexual activity or desire as anything but “mostly” or “exclusively” heterosexual until after they come out as gay, lesbian or bisexual to others, or at least accept a queer identity themselves. This might be particularly true for older individuals who have lived closeted for a larger proportion of their adult lives. Unfortunately, this cannot be adequately addressed using data from this sample.

Are there men and women who might privately see themselves as gay or lesbian or bisexual, but who have not been sexually active with someone of the same sex in the past year? Certainly there are. Closeted men and women might never act on their same-sex desires, but that hardly means that they are straight. Are there men and women who have had a same-sex intimate encounter in the last year or at some time in their adult lives who do not consider themselves gay, lesbian or bisexual? Again, the answer is probably yes. Experimentation with same-sex attraction, even if it occurs more than once, does not itself necessarily transform a person’s identity. The six “straight” and twelve “uncertain” individuals whose responses are included in the final sample indicated that their sexual activity and desires were not exclusively heterosexual. We know they are not heterosexual, but what kind of non-heterosexuals might they be?

All six “straight” respondents—five women and one man—reported that their adult sexual experience was “mostly heterosexual.” The man and two of the women are currently in heterosexual marriages. The remaining three women are currently single: one is divorced, another has a steady romantic partner, and the remaining woman is unattached. That

these individuals demonstrate a degree of comfort with the conceptual dissonance between “straight” identity and not-so-straight sexual behavior suggests, albeit inconclusively, that they (are not comfortable with the “standard” non-heterosexual identities, that they do not see themselves as “lesbian” or “gay” or even “bisexual.”) This might be a function of age, but with such small subsamples, there is no way to statistically test this. Straight respondents are all over 34 years of age. Three-fourths of the respondents uncertain about their sexual identity are age 32 or younger. The implication is that older people have lived their lives in a particular heteronormative way, structured their lives through marriage or long-term relationships, or lived closeted so long that they do not identify with non-heterosexual identity categories. They are unlikely to be uncertain about their identities because they are accustomed to them, comfortable with their lives, and do not feel motivated to adopt what they might see as a political label that will not, at this stage of the life course, enhance their existence. On the other hand, they may also feel compelled to maintain their “straight” personae in order to minimize the risk of losing the stability or security they have built over the course of their lives.

Of the twelve people—seven women and five men—who report they are uncertain about their sexuality, half are currently in heterosexual relationships. Two of the women are married, and one man and three women are in different-sex domestic partnerships. Among the men uncertain about their sexuality, none reports that his sexual behavior or desire has been exclusively heterosexual. Two men, both under 30 years old, indicated that they have been “mostly homosexual.” One man over thirty indicated he has been “bisexual,” while two men described themselves as “mostly heterosexual” in adulthood. Among the seven women uncertain about their sexual identity, only one described her adult sexual activity as “mostly homosexual,” and only one other described it as “bisexual.” Four women described themselves as “mostly heterosexual,” while the remaining woman indicated that her behavior has been “exclusively heterosexual.” While age may play a role in determining uncertainty about sexual identity, since most of these women are currently in heterosexual relationships,

it is reasonable to conclude that they have had limited opportunities to explore their non-heterosexual identities, or perhaps have chosen to forego such opportunities altogether.

All eighteen individuals were coded as bisexuals in the final sample. This should not be interpreted as a statement about the nature of bisexual identity, i.e., that it is a transitional identity between straight and gay. Several scholars have challenged such claims (Rust 1996), and have convincingly demonstrated that bisexuality is a stable queer identity unique from other non-heterosexual identities (Johnson 2004). The six individuals who identify as straight are clearly not *heterosexual* under my strict definition, but are instead behaviorally bisexual and relatively untroubled by uncertainty or confusion that might be created by any contradiction between identity and behavior. It would appear that they have successfully redefined heterosexuality for themselves, broadened it to include pleasures, desires and relationships that for many “straight” people are sexually out-of-bounds. It is unclear, however, how this redefined heterosexuality is substantively different from bisexuality, and it is even less clear how stable these identities actually are. It is at least possible that as they age, some of the uncertain and bisexual people may adopt a recognizable gay or lesbian identity.

Based on the available data, the twelve individuals who are unsure about their sexual identities are similarly not *homosexual*. Almost all of these respondents will arguably claim a queer identity eventually. A number will ultimately understand themselves as lesbians or gay men, and it is possible that others may come to identify themselves as bisexual. Some may find that they identify as straight, despite their same-sex attraction or sexual activity. At this point, available data do not allow me to speculate which individuals will adopt a given identity. The data do tell me, however, that these twelve individuals are at least behaviorally bisexual.

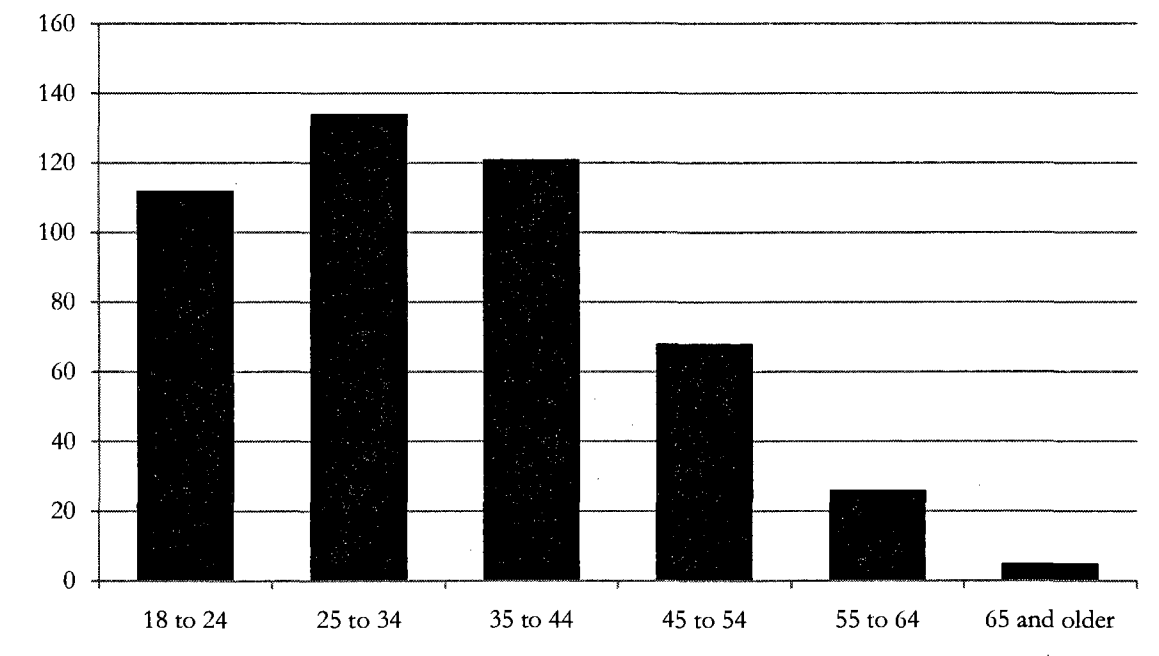
It may appear that I have spent an inordinate amount of time discussing the disposition of eighteen cases, but I have done so in order to illustrate that while it is fluid or dynamic in theory, sexual identity is not so unstable in practical terms as many theorists might suggest (Johnson 2004). More than 96 percent of all respondents identified themselves as either

lesbian/gay or bisexual, including 14 percent representing the most closeted individuals in the sample, those whose homosexual or bisexual identity is known perhaps only to close friends or a family member. Clearly, the categories themselves are largely unproblematic, even less problematic than the more politically-charged gender categories. “Straight” or “uncertain” respondents generally have more in common with bisexuals in the sample than with homosexuals. Like a sizable number of bisexual respondents, many are in different-sex relationships. Most claim a more or less bisexual adult sexual history, not an exclusive history of heterosexual or homosexual desire or experience. What is undeniable, from the data, is that none of these respondents have claimed to be gay or lesbian—they are not homosexual, a distinction that will prove to be significant in this work.

#### Coming Out and Coming of Age

The sample of adult non-heterosexuals analyzed here ( $n=466$ ) includes 233 men and 233 women ranging in age from 18 to 74 (see summary of age distribution in Figure 2).

Figure 2. Distribution of Age in the Sample, N=462





The median age in the sample is 33; for women, 29; for men, 38. The sample mean for age is 34.95, although mean age is higher for men ( $M=37.74$ ,  $SD=12.22$ ) than for women ( $M=32.16$ ,  $SD=10.95$ ). Independent samples t-test results showed that the mean difference in age between men and women was significant and moderately strong [ $t(460)=5.167$ ,  $p<.001$ ;  $\eta^2=.06$ ], a finding that suggests a degree of bias in the sample, based on an interaction between age and gender.

The age differences by gender might be explained by how individuals came to the survey instrument. Almost twice as many women than men found invitations to *Quest for Quotidian* on community or network websites, while about twice as many men than women reported they found the survey through references on online blogs. Young women who came to the survey via sites like MySpace.com or Friendster.com would have referred individuals within their own social networks, i.e., women who were similar in age and interests. Men and women who were referred to the survey via a gay- and lesbian-friendly personal or political blog are perhaps more highly educated than their counterparts on MySpace. If that is true, we can assume that blog readers are probably older on average than users of network sites that market to a younger crowd. Like younger respondents, older respondents are likely to share recruitment information or links to the survey with individuals in their own social network. If men were more likely than women to come to the survey via blogs, then it is likely that the mean age of men would be higher than for women based on the assumed homogeneity of social and friendship networks. The same assumptions would lead to the conclusion that if women were more likely than men to be recruited into the survey from a community forum or network website populated by younger people, the mean age of women in the sample would be lower.

Clearly, age, gender and sexuality interact in meaningful ways. For example, women are more than six times more likely than men to claim a bisexual identity, and women under thirty are twice as likely as older women to be bisexual rather than lesbian. I turned again to t-tests to examine these interactions. Homosexuals tend to be slightly older ( $M=36.58$ ,

$SD=11.97$ ) than bisexuals [ $M=32.36$ ,  $SD=11.48$ ;  $t(462)=3.778$ ,  $p<.001$ ], although the magnitude of the effect is small ( $\eta^2 = .03$ ). Similar results were obtained when I compared ages of lesbian and bisexual women, excluding men entirely. Although the effect was small ( $\eta^2 = .02$ ), the difference in mean age between lesbian women ( $M=34.15$ ,  $SD=11.65$ ) and bisexual women [ $M=30.92$ ,  $SD=10.34$ ;  $t(229)=2.195$ ,  $p=.029$ ] was significant, and therefore likely to affect later analyses. The sample may contain other biases, but in examining the relationship between age and sexuality, or age and gender, it is clear that more complex analyses of this sample should take gendered sexuality into account and control for age.

### Visibility, Age and the Closet

I asked respondents to indicate how long they had personally been aware that they might be homosexual, bisexual or otherwise not exclusively heterosexual. Most respondents indicated that awareness of their sexual identity as different from heterosexuality came early—in their teen years or before ( $n=373$ ). Fifteen percent became aware of their homosexual or bisexual identity in college or their early twenties, with 4.1 percent reporting they have known they were not heterosexual only since their mid-twenties or later.

Being aware of one's sexual identity is not the same thing as being "out," or openly bisexual or homosexual to others. I asked respondents at what age they first came out, and their responses are summarized in Table 1. A number of respondents ( $n=76$ ) seemed to take issue with the question, and did not provide a specific age. For descriptive purposes, I estimated these missing ages based on the mean age of "coming out" within the specific age category that contained the case, making adjustments when the mean age was higher than actual age, or when it was clear that the respondent was not open about his or her sexuality. This is admittedly not very precise, but it does give us a general idea about when people make their non-heterosexuality known, their sexual personae more visible. The mean age at which individuals in this sample came out—whether I include the estimates or not—is 21, and the median age is 19.

Table 1. Age Respondent Came Out as Non-heterosexual (includes estimates) by Current Age of Respondent, N=462, missing=4

Age at Coming Out	Current Age of Respondents				
	18 to 24	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 59	60 and older
Before age 18	71	44	21	10	4
18 to 24	37	73	67	36	2
25 to 34		17	21	16	8
35 to 44			12	8	2
45 to 54				9	1
55 or older				1	2
Total	108	134	121	80	19

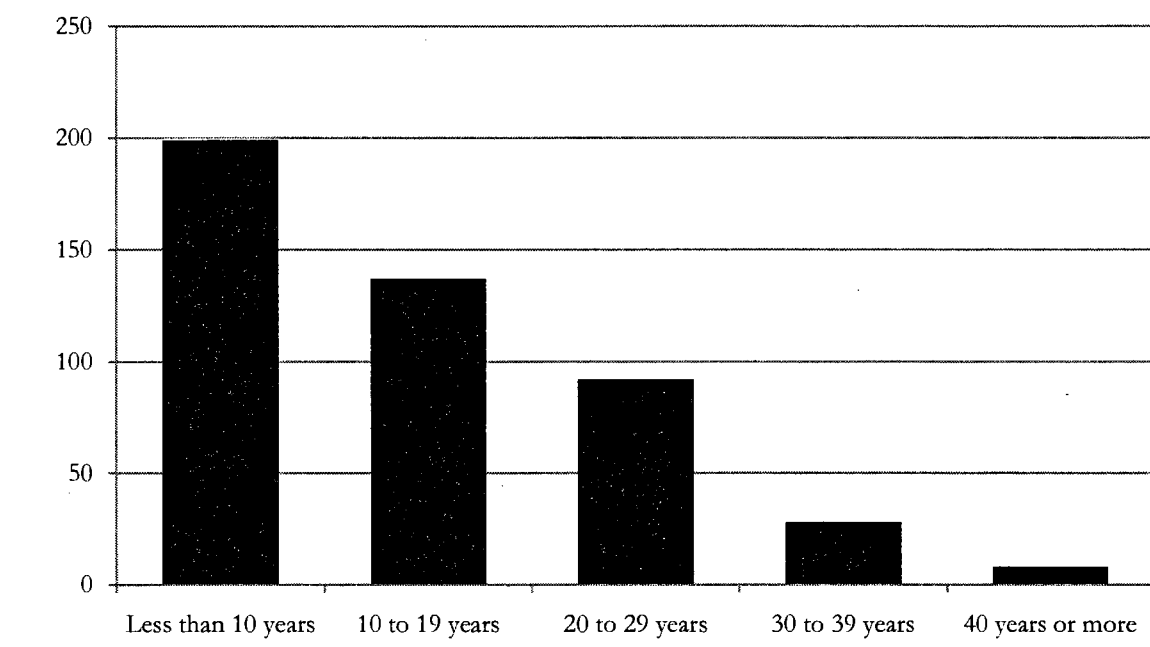
Because most people come out—at least to themselves, and perhaps to friends—before they reach the age of 25, it appears that once people become aware of their sexual difference, it is generally only a short time before this difference becomes the basis for a more public identity. The correlation between reported awareness of one’s sexual identity and the age respondents report “coming out” is statistically significant, with stronger effects for women ( $r=.362, p<.001, n=229$ ) than for men ( $r=.262, p<.001, n=231$ ). Negative correlation between the age of awareness and the age at which respondents personally and publicly acknowledged their sexuality would have indicated that people tend to delay coming out for much longer periods of time, perhaps until another stage of the life course.

It is unreasonable to assume that people immediately bolt out of the closet the moment they realize they are not heterosexual; some delay between realization and actualization is to be expected among almost all respondents. Coming out is intimately tied to coming of age, which is to say that becoming an independent adult, graduating from high school or college, or moving out to be on one’s own (perhaps in an urban center where one might meet other gay, lesbian or bisexual people), appears to account for much of the delay between awareness and coming out among individuals in this sample.

Right-wing conservative opponents to gay rights, and particularly family rights for same-sex couples, point to the increased visibility of non-heterosexual populations as evidence that homosexuals collectively engage in some form of “recruitment” in order to undermine heterosexuality and “traditional family values.” This specious claim of a gay conspiracy is part of the mean-spirited “homosexual agenda” discourse. From the data here, visibility of non-heterosexual people is increasing, but not because young people are being convinced to join the ranks of the queer community—there is, after all, no unified effort on the part of any imaginary monolithic homosexual organization to dismantle the traditional family by encouraging young people to abandon their heterosexuality. Rather, it appears that as queer visibility increases, younger non-heterosexuals are more likely than were individuals in older cohorts to acknowledge and fully embrace their alternative sexual identities earlier in the life course. In other words, the “lag” between discovery and acceptance of non-heterosexual identity—between realization and actualization—appears to have shortened, so that younger may be just as likely as older non-heterosexuals to be “totally out” of the closet, to see and present themselves unapologetically and even proudly as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Figure 2 above shows how age is distributed in the sample, which includes only adult individuals at least eighteen years old. Unsurprisingly, the age distribution curve is steepest nearer the lowest value (18 years of age), and slopes down more or less uniformly from left to right as age—and mortality—increases. The variable *yearsout* is the difference between a person’s age in years and the age at which that person first came out, and its value ranges from 0 to 61 years (where “0” is less than one year or not out at all). The sample mean for *yearsout* is 13.7 years, and the median is 11 years. The *yearsout* variable is summarized in Figure 3. Predictably, the number of years since coming out falls steadily at each ten-year interval until year 30, reflecting the age distribution in the sample. The sharper drop in the 30 to 39 year category might indicate that individuals over 30 were more likely to delay coming out, and thus have been openly gay for a smaller proportion of their adult lives.

Figure 3. Distribution of Years Since Coming Out, N=464



### Being Out: Perceptions of Openness

Coming out as a gay, lesbian or bisexual person is frequently described as a liberating process of self-realization leading to self-disclosure, which in turn can lead to acceptance and integration (Derlega and Chaikin 1977; Reis and Shaver 1988; Jordan and Deluty 1998), and the resolution of the cognitive dissonance inherent in leading a “double life” as a non-heterosexual in a heterosexual world (LaSala 2000; Berger 1990; Johnson 2002). Alternatively, disclosure of sexual identity might have negative consequences, including

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for Perceived Openness (*howout*), by Gendered Sexual Identity

Gender/Sexuality	n	Mean	Median	Mode
Biexual men	43	4.26	4	2
Bisexual women	144	4.75	5	5
Gay men	190	5.84	6	7
Lesbian women	89	6.20	6	7
Total	466			

isolation and increased risk of discrimination and violence. To capture respondents' perceptions about their own degree of openness about their sexual identity, I asked, "How open would you say you are about your sexual identity today?" Responses were recorded on a 7-point scale, where 1 indicated "not out at all" and 7 indicated "totally out." The higher the score, the more open about their sexuality the respondents perceive themselves to be.

The mean score for the sample was 5.43 ( $n=466$ ), which falls on the high end of the scale. The modal response was 7, or "totally out," and represents 33 percent of the sample, but 122 of the 157 individuals who perceive themselves to be "totally out" are gay or lesbian, not bisexual. Indeed, the modal response for all bisexual respondents was 5 (see Table 2). The data clearly suggest bisexual and homosexual people differ with regard to how out or open about their sexuality they are or can be. Comparing mean scores on perceived openness revealed a significant difference in scores between homosexuals ( $M=5.96$ ,  $SD=1.29$ ) and bisexuals [ $M=4.64$ ,  $SD=1.79$ ;  $t(312.92)=-8.707$ ,  $p<.001$ ]. Differences in sexuality explain more than 14 percent of the variance in the perceived openness variable, which strongly suggests that coming out as gay or lesbian might be easier—psychologically and socially—than coming out as bisexual.

Across the sample, "how out" someone perceives himself or herself to be is not significantly correlated with age. Instead, self-perception of openness is negatively correlated with age at coming out ( $r=-.185$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $n=464$ ), and positively correlated with the number of years that have passed since subjects first came out ( $r=.136$ ,  $p=.003$ ,  $n=464$ ). Essentially, these findings tell a hypothetical story about the coming out process: The older people were when they first came out, the less open they are about their sexuality today, but as more time passes, the more strongly people see themselves as affirmatively queer.

Given this story, I hypothesized that younger respondents would be less open about their sexuality, on average, than older individuals. In other words, I expected to find that older individuals were more secure in their identity and less likely to be ambivalent or tentative about their sexuality. I conducted a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA)

to explore the relationship between age and the level of openness about their sexual identity reported by respondents. Subjects were divided into five age groups (Group 1: 18 to 24; Group 2: 25 to 34; Group 3: 35 to 44; Group 4: 45 to 59; and Group 5: 60 and older). The analysis revealed no statistically significant difference in perceived openness scores for the five groups. Contrast comparisons also failed to show significant differences. I conducted a second ANOVA wherein subjects were divided into five groups according to the number of years since they came out. While a statistically significant difference in means was found, closer analysis showed that the difference in question was between Group 1 (0 to 10 years,  $n=199$ ) and Group 5 (40 or more years,  $n=8$ ). The important finding here is that there is no statistically significant difference between those who have come out recently and those who have been out for longer.

#### Being Out: Disclosure of Sexual Identity

Empirically, being open about one's sexuality must be more than a subjective perception or attitude. Individuals should be able to demonstrate through some behavior that they are, in fact, open about their lives, loves and identity (that their lives are open to scrutiny and critique, as well as acceptance). On one hand, the item above is at least a measure of self-acceptance and level of comfort one personally feels with what might be a new but true sexual identity, but by itself it is not a reliable measure of integration. Lower scores on this measure of "openness" might just as easily be interpreted as levels of commitment to personal privacy, or more cynically, to a degree of secrecy (Cameron and Hargreaves 2005), shame or internalized homophobia (Herek et al. 1997). It is also possible that the measure of perceived openness overestimates how out people really are. For example, sample selection bias might explain higher scores on perceived openness: people who see themselves as very out are more likely to complete a survey like this one. To validate the measure, it must be calibrated against a more objective measure, one that captures patterns of self-disclosure. To be out, I argue, is to tell someone that you are.

To measure the degree of self-disclosure, I had to determine whether respondents had disclosed their sexual identity to others within their social networks. In response to the question, “To whom have you personally come out about your sexuality?” individuals identified groups in four social network domains—friends, family, work and community—to whom they had disclosed. Each domain is further divided into an “inner circle” and “outer circle.” The four inner circle groups are assumed to include significant others, people who have more intimate ties with the subject, people with whom respondents interact more or less regularly, or people more inclined to be sympathetic toward non-heterosexuals:

- Friends: gay, lesbian or queer friends
- Family: immediate family (parents and siblings, spouse, children)
- Work: coworkers (people you work with)
- Community: neighbors (people and families who live close to you or in your neighborhood)

The four outer circle groups include those whose relationship with the subject is more formal or institutionalized, people who might be less sympathetic toward self-disclosure of non-heterosexuality:

- Friends: heterosexual friends
- Family: extended family (grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins, etc.)
- Work: employers (people you work for)
- Community: community leaders (like pastors, teachers, business owners, politicians, etc.)
- Community: community leaders (like pastors, teachers, business owners, politicians, etc.)

Each of the disclosure variables is a binary variable coded “1” for disclosure or “0” for non-disclosure. In each domain, I assume that it would be easier to come out to people in the inner circle than to people in the outer circle. To illustrate this idea, consider that one might be more comfortable coming out to his/her parents than to grandparents; to lesbian or gay



friends than to heterosexual friends; to the person in the next cubicle than to the executive in the office down the hall; or to the people living in the house next door rather than the president of the homeowner's association.

People's perception of openness (*howout*) is positively and very strongly correlated with levels of disclosure (*disclose*), when level of disclosure is the sum of the number of groups to whom an individual has personally revealed his/her sexual identity ( $r = .778, n=466, p<.001$ ). In this case, the range of possible scores for disclose is 0 (not out to any group) to 8 (out to every group within every domain). Twenty-one percent ( $n=99$ ) of all respondents ( $N=466$ ) indicated that they had come out about their sexuality to someone in each subgroup in each domain.

For my purposes, respondents are considered "out" in a given domain if they admit they have disclosed their sexual identity to someone in the inner circle, someone in the outer circle, or both. To capture this, I created four binary variables where 1 = "out" and 0 = "not out" for each domain. I summed these variables to obtain a different measure of disclosure (variable name: *veryout*) which yields the total number of social domains in which respondents live openly as non-heterosexuals. By this measure, 48 percent ( $n=224$ ) are out in all four domains; 24 percent in three domains; 14 percent in two domains, and 12 percent in only one domain. Only six respondents (1.3 percent) have not disclosed their sexual identity to anyone in any domain. Their scores on perceived openness about their sexuality are correspondingly low ( $M=1.2$  on 7-point scale). In contrast, scores on perceived openness are relatively high ( $M=6.46$ ) for respondents who have disclosed in all four domains. *Veryout*, like the *disclose* variable upon which it is based, is positively and strongly correlated with scores on perceived openness ( $r=.750, n=466, p<.001$ ).

#### *Out to Friends and Family*

By a large margin, most individuals in the sample report to have come out to their friends (out to heterosexual friends, 88 percent; out to gay, lesbian or bisexual friends, 95 percent). Respondents out in only one domain ( $n=57$ ) have generally disclosed their sexual

Table 3. Results of Logistic Regression of Bisexuality and Gender on Disclosure in Fewer than Two Domains (e.g., friends, family, work, or community)

Variables	B	Wald Chi-Square	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval for Odds Ratio	
				<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Bisexual	2.389	39.969**	10.904	5.199	22.868
Gender (man=1)	.556	2.841	1.743	.913	3.326
Constant	-3.509	80.210	.030		

\*\*  $p < .001$

identity only to friends, but a small proportion are only out to family members. Among the 63 individuals who have come out in only one domain, 45 are bisexual and only 12 are homosexual. The six individuals who are not out in any domain identified as bisexual. Logistic regression (see Table 3) showed that bisexuals are significantly more likely than homosexuals to be closeted or out only in only one domain. Bisexuals were more than ten times more likely to be out about their sexual identity in only one domain or not at all than were their homosexual counterparts, even when controlling for gender.

Family is a somewhat different matter. While 79 percent of respondents have personally come out to their immediate families (which includes parents), only 42 percent are out to members of their extended family. About 19 percent of respondents report that their relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.) disapprove of their sexual identity, a figure which may underestimate disapproval, given that in the same question an additional 16 percent indicated that their relatives were unaware of their sexual identity, and another 30 percent have “mixed feelings” about it. The potential disapproval from family members—whether actual, anticipated, or inferred—might limit disclosure to the inner circle, or immediate family, and encourage lesbian and gay individuals to treat their sexual identity as a “family secret” that need not be shared with more distant relatives.

#### *Out at Work*

Being out at work can mean either being out to coworkers—peers who themselves might be considered friends—and being out to employers, including supervisors, human resource

personnel, or other members of management with some degree of power over individuals or influence over employment status. While 73 percent of respondents indicate that they are out at work, only about 52 percent are out to both coworkers and employers. Fewer than one percent are out only to the people or organizations for whom they work, with the rest out only to coworkers (20 percent) or not out at work at all (27 percent).

The workplace has historically been hostile to gay and lesbian people, a site of discrimination where disclosure carries higher personal and public risk of negative consequences (Schneider 1987). Until relatively recently, homosexuals—or even suspected homosexuals—could be fired, slandered, even arrested (Kaiser 1997, Chauncey 1995), and had few options, legal or otherwise, for fighting such discrimination. The optimum strategy for most of the 20th century was to take a Weberian approach to managing alternative sexual identities at work: namely, keep private matters at home, and labor in a sort of professional closet at work. Forty years ago, it would have been an unmitigated personal disaster for a homosexual in the United States if an employer or supervisor discovered that he or she enjoyed same-sex pleasures, or lived with and loved a person of the same sex. Today, non-heterosexuals appear to be relatively comfortable discussing their private lives openly with coworkers and peers—the inner circle at work—but remain wary of revealing their sexuality to organizational leaders, managers or owners who populate the outer circle. This pattern is similar, both conceptually and numerically, to family disclosure patterns, strongly suggesting that being out at work is about as important to individuals as being out to family. By coming out to coworkers, non-heterosexuals transform the workplace into a queer space, by some accounts, much the same way as individuals who come out to their parents, brothers or sisters reveal not only their own sexuality but the entire family's status as a queer or gay family—a status the family holds by virtue of having at least one non-heterosexual member. That almost 80 percent of respondents in this sample are out on the job is an encouraging sign of increasing acceptance, even if the risk of stigmatization or discrimination remains relatively high for gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

### *Out in the Community*

To live openly in communities essentially requires disclosing sexual identity to strangers with whom public, semi-public and political spaces of the social landscape are shared. More than 40 percent of respondents are out neither to their neighbors nor to political or community leaders. For most respondents, it appears that being out to community or political leaders (56 percent) is easier than being out to neighbors (46 percent).

### *Patterns of Disclosure*

Among respondents out in two domains ( $n=67$ ), twice as many are out to friends and family than are out to friends and at work ( $n=44$  and  $n=22$ , respectively). Only one respondent indicated he or she was out to friends and in the community. Individuals out across three domains ( $n=112$ ) are most likely to be out to friends, family and at work ( $n=74$ ), although nineteen respondents are out in the friends, family and community domains, and another nineteen are out across the friends, work and community domains. While this is useful information, it does not tell us much about how the inner and outer circles work.

Among those who did not come out to everyone ( $n=367$ ), the configurations of disclosure vary markedly. In all, the sample features fifty different configurations of disclosure across the inner and outer circle groups, representing roughly a third of 169 possible configurations. As Table 4 shows, five configurations of disclosure capture one half of the entire sample, while ten configurations capture two-thirds of the sample. "All friends," "all work" and similar notations should be read to mean that the respondent disclosed to both inner and outer circle groups within the particular domain.

The diverse patterns of disclosure provide some clues as what life outside the closet might actually mean for the majority of lesbian, gay and bisexual people, but they also seem to reflect larger historical changes in the family system and social conditions in communities. For example, the infrequent inclusion of "extended family" in the most common configurations suggests that family ties within nuclear families are strong, while ties across nuclear families in the same kin network are relatively weak. What is clearly important to

Table 4. Most Common Configurations of Disclosure of Sexual Identity, ranked by frequency of response, N=466

“To whom have you personally come out about your sexuality?”	Frequency	Percent of Sample
<b>TOP FIVE</b>		
1. All friends, all family, all work, all community	99	21.24
2. All friends, immediate family and coworkers	42	9.01
3. All friends, immediate family, coworkers, neighbors	40	8.58
4. All friends	32	6.87
5. All friends, all family, all work	20	4.30
<i>Top Five Totals</i>	233	50.00
<hr/>		
<b>TOP TEN</b>		
6. All friends, immediate family	19	4.08
7. All friends, and coworkers	18	3.86
8. Queer friends, all family, all work	15	3.22
9. Queer friends only	15	3.22
10. All friends, all family, all work, neighbors	14	3.00
<i>Top Ten Cumulative Totals</i>	314	67.38
<hr/>		
<b>TOP FIFTEEN</b>		
11. All friends, all family, all work, community leaders	13	2.79
12. Queer friends, immediate family	13	2.79
13. Queer friends, all family, all work, neighbors	12	2.58
14. All friends, all family	9	1.93
15. Immediate family	9	1.93
<i>Top Fifteen Cumulative Totals</i>	370	79.40

a person’s sense of being out is disclosure to immediate family; how members of extended families respond to a person’s coming out appears to be relatively unimportant in the larger scheme of things, a low priority. Non-heterosexuals and their families, like most in the United States, are increasingly disconnected from extended kinship networks by geographical or social distance, time, jobs, or ideology or beliefs. A similar pattern of isolation seems to exist in reverse in the community domain, wherein people report they are less likely to come out to their neighbors than they are to come out to more distant and impersonal administrators, politicians or other officials in the community. It is plausible to assume that non-heterosexuals seek to protect their privacy and their own nuclear families from potential

threats posed by “nosy neighbors” or neighbors with a political or ideological ax to grind, and thus are less likely to befriend their neighbors or risk exposure (or judgment) by interacting with them. The result is obvious: weaker informal ties between families and households in communities, reflecting the more general decline in community cohesion lamented by many sociologists and scholars (Putnam 2001).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### LIFE ALONG THE QUOTIDIAN: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY

#### Children of Marriage

As a point of historical fact, it seems clear and uncontroversial that heterosexual marriages and households have produced far more lesbians, bisexuals and gay men than same-sex-headed households ever will. In other words, the vast majority of non-heterosexuals come from rather unremarkable families. In this sample, more than 93 percent of respondents are children of marriage, in the more or less traditional sense. Specifically, 429 respondents were born after their parents married one another, while another eight respondents (only 1.7 percent of the sample) reported they were born before their parents married. Of the 437 parental marriages reported, roughly one in three ( $n=141$ , or 32 percent) had ended in divorce by 2005. Most respondents who experienced the divorce of their parents reported they were 12 years old or younger when the divorce occurred ( $n=89$ ). Thirty-two respondents experienced their parents' divorce during their teen years, age 13 to 18, and nineteen respondents experienced their parents divorce as adults.

Across the entire sample, only one in four respondents to this survey experienced parental divorce before age nineteen, and half of these are currently between 18 and 34 years old. That parental divorce is more common in more recent cohorts is consistent with general divorce trends in the US population. Although the findings might be contested in political and cultural discourses, a significant family research literature indicates that children do best when their parents can avoid divorce (see Wallerstein et al. 2000). Three of four non-heterosexual respondents in this survey were reared by by two parents in a relatively

stable, long-lasting marriage. Put simply, non-heterosexual people in this sample were more likely than not to grow up within a family configuration that—according to conventional wisdom—is best suited to children’s development and long-term well-being: a married, two-parent heterosexual household.

### *Parents’ Education*

Parents’ education influences both social structure within the family (such as the division of labor) and socialization of children, and likely has some bearing on the values retained by adult non-heterosexual offspring and the norms and relationships to which they aspire. Table 5 compares mother’s and father’s educational attainment, and demonstrates how education is distributed within parental couples ( $n=450$ ; sixteen cases are not included in the crosstabulation because one or both parents’ education was either unknown or unreported). About 44 percent of fathers had obtained at least a four-year college degree, compared with only 37 percent of mothers. Mother’s reported educational attainment is negatively

**Table 5. Mother’s Education by Father’s Education as Percentage of Sample (N=450)**

Mother’s Education	Father’s Educational Attainment						Totals (Mothers)
	High School <i>some</i>	High School <i>diploma</i>	College/University <i>some</i>	College/University <i>BA/BS</i>	Graduate Study <i>MA/MS</i>	Graduate Study <i>JD, MD, Ph.D.*</i>	
some high school	11 (2.44%)	9 (2.00%)	5 (1.11%)	--	1 (0.22%)	--	26 (5.78%)
high school diploma	21 (4.67%)	57 (12.67%)	33 (7.33%)	17 (3.78%)	7 (1.56%)	3 (0.67%)	138 (30.67%)
some college	11 (2.44%)	21 (4.67%)	46 (10.22%)	22 (4.89%)	11 (2.44%)	8 (1.78%)	119 (26.44%)
4-year degree	3 (0.67%)	8 (1.78%)	11 (2.44%)	35 (7.78%)	16 (3.56%)	16 (3.56%)	89 (19.78%)
Master’s degree	1 (0.22%)	3 (0.67%)	7 (1.56%)	10 (2.22%)	14 (3.11%)	21 (4.67%)	56 (12.44%)
Ph.D., MD, JD*	--	--	4 (0.89%)	3 (0.67%)	7 (1.56%)	8 (1.78%)	22 (4.89%)
Totals (Fathers)	47 (10.44%)	98 (21.78%)	106 (23.56%)	87 (19.33%)	56 (12.44%)	56 (12.44%)	450 (100%)



correlated with respondent's age ( $r=-.196$ ,  $n=461$ ,  $p<.0005$ ). While the correlation is not particularly strong, it does at least suggest that mothers of older respondents were more likely to encounter barriers to education, or to marry before they completed higher education. This is not surprising at all, but lends support to the contention that the families and parents of non-heterosexuals are not unusual or particularly unique. Rather, they formed and survived through basically the same social and historical circumstances as their neighbors, friends and other contemporary families.

#### *Growing up Christian—Or not*

More than 77 percent of the sample ( $n=362$ ) reported that they grew up in families that were at least nominally “Christian” families—that is, they called themselves “Christian,” even while affiliation, church attendance and the intensity of Christian beliefs at home were all variable. About 35 percent of Christian respondents grew up in Catholic homes, compared to 55 percent who grew up under the influence of Protestant denominational beliefs. The remaining ten percent grew up in Mormon homes, in an unspecified “Christian” home, or in Christian interfaith households. “Christian interfaith” refers to households characterized by religious heterogamy. Such households or religious upbringing would be described by respondents as having at least one Christian parent, or parents who held different religious beliefs. For example, if respondent wrote in “Catholic and Atheist,” the household would have been coded “Christian interfaith.” Likewise, if a respondent indicated “Baptist and Jewish” or “Jewish and Lutheran,” the response would be coded “Christian interfaith.” As members of these “Christian” households, some respondents never attended religious services, but the majority did at least occasionally attend services with their parents and/or siblings.

Among nominally Christian homes, respondents whose families were Catholic or mainline Protestant (Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, etc.) attended church services slightly more frequently than did respondents who identified their families as belonging to Protestant fundamentalist congregations (e.g., Baptist, Lutheran, Assembly of God,

etc.), suggesting that the intensity of religious belief predicts, to some extent, religious attendance patterns. I asked all respondents to describe the religious beliefs and convictions of their family of origin as liberal, moderate, orthodox or fundamentalist. Orthodox and fundamentalist beliefs were coded “1” for intense religious upbringing. All other responses were coded “0,” assuming that liberal and moderate responses indicated less intense religious belief. Using this measure (*fundrelg*), about 21 percent of the sample ( $n=99$ ; 94 Christian, 5 non-Christian) are affirmatively identified as respondents who grew up in homes characterized by relatively intense religious belief.

In addition to measuring intensity of belief, I also measured frequency of attendance. Attendance was coded “1” when respondents report attending services at least two or three times per month to as often as several times per week (239 total, or 51.3 percent; among Christians, 214 total, or 59.1 percent), described here as “strong/regular.” Religious attendance (*churchf1*) among respondents who never went to church (55 total, or 11.8 percent,  $N=466$ ; among Christians, 22 total, or 6.1 percent,  $n=362$ ), or who went to church no more often than once a month (172 total, or 36.9 percent; among Christians, 126 total, or 34.7 percent), was coded “0” for “weak/irregular.” Across the sample ( $N=466$ ), slightly more than half of all respondents ( $n=239$ ) reported attending religious services with their families at least several times a month. This number includes some respondents who grew up in atheist or agnostic homes, as well as non-Christian, nominally Christian, non-denominational Christian, and Christian interfaith homes. One in four non-Christian respondents attended religious services several times a month or more, a number that includes eight of 22 Jewish respondents and seven of eight Unitarian Universalist respondents. Five respondents who claimed their families were atheist or agnostic attended religious services fairly regularly during childhood. About 22 percent of respondents ( $n=102$ ) grew up in non-Christian households, but a number of these households were still religious or at least influenced by religious practice. While half of these households ( $n=51$ ) were described as “Atheist/Agnostic,” the remaining half included Jewish ( $n=30$ ), Unitarian

Universalist ( $n=8$ ), Pagan/Wiccan ( $n=4$ ), Muslim ( $n=1$ ), Hindu ( $n=1$ ), or other non-specified ( $n=6$ ) religious households. Two respondents did not provide data for analysis.

### Current Religious Beliefs and Practices

Most mainstream Christian denominations in the United States have explicitly rejected gays and lesbians and their families, ensuring through condemnatory rhetoric that non-heterosexuals feel unwelcome in congregations, including those congregations to which they or their families once belonged. The attitudes and policies of Christian churches toward homosexuality, of course, differ little from those in other major religions, including more orthodox Judaism and Islam in general, neither of which is sympathetic to lesbians, gays or bisexuals. Not surprisingly, many gays and lesbians have responded to the criticisms from religion and religious leaders by changing their religious affiliation, or rejecting religion altogether.

Sixty percent of all respondents report that their religious identity or affiliation has changed from that of their parents or the households of their youth. Most of the change in religion measured in the survey occurs among respondents reporting they grew up in traditional Christian households—Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, etc. I define as “non-Christian” any reported religious belief or practice outside mainstream Catholic or Protestant denominations, including Unitarian Universalist congregations. Sixty-nine percent of respondents from mainstream Christian households (including interfaith households) reported a change in religious affiliation or belief, compared to only 30 percent of non-Christians whose religious beliefs have changed since their youth. These data should not be interpreted as indicating an abandonment of religion or commitment to spirituality, however. Many respondents have apparently moved from one religious denomination to another, e.g., from Catholicism to one or another form of Protestantism; or from one religious tradition to another, e.g., from mainstream Christianity to Unitarian Universalism. Even though a substantial number of individuals from religious homes today report they

are atheist or agnostic ( $n=101$ ), a few individuals ( $n=17$ ) who grew up in atheist or agnostic households now report belonging to one faith or another, although usually not mainstream or fundamentalist Christianity. Only three of thirty Jewish respondents reported a change in religion, even though some forms of Judaism are hostile to gay and lesbian identity, which suggests that Jewish ethnic identity transcends religious practice.

More than half of all respondents claim that they are at least slightly religious ( $n=266$ ), compared to those who say they are not religious at all ( $n=200$ ), but current religious attendance is relatively infrequent among study participants. Only 66 individuals in the sample report attending religious services more or less regularly (at least two or three times per month), although more than twice that number report that they are currently at least moderately religious ( $n=134$ ). Of the 66 regular attendees, only 38 are self-identified Christians, despite the fact that 146 individuals overall currently identify as “Christian” of one stripe or another. The relatively strong reported religiosity coupled with low attendance suggests that individuals do in fact hold religious beliefs, and perhaps even retain the faith or affiliation of their parents and families, but are either unwilling to participate in religious activities, or they perceive they are unwelcome in traditional Christian communities. In other cases, Christian respondents have chosen to join alternative, more inclusive religious communities to fill their spiritual needs. Respondents who were atheist or agnostic, or who grew up in non-Christian or non-traditional religions, appear to feel little compulsion to change their religious affiliations or belief systems.

### Family Support

Same-sex couples in committed relationships have to improvise, or come up with novel ways of organizing their romantic and practical lives together because their relationships exist outside the legitimizing support systems associated with heterosexual marriage (Adam 2004, 2006). “They must do so,” writes Blasius (1992:648), “in a cultural environment of extreme prejudice, which denies their existence outright, or, at best, allows them to exist by passing

. . . by adopting a heterosexual persona, or if openly gay or lesbian, by adopting a mode of relating to each other that mimics heterosexual ‘couples.’” The online survey included an array of questions to measure family and community support for non-heterosexual individuals and their families. For example, I asked, “would you say that your relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.) approve or disapprove of your sexual identity?” Coupled Individuals received a second question, “Would you say that your relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, etc.) approve or disapprove of your current relationship—your marriage, civil union, domestic partnership or dating relationship?” Both items were measured on a 5-point Likert Scale, from “strongly disapprove” to “strongly approve.”

To capture perceptions of social support from areas beyond the family of origin, I included a series of questions about relationship support from relatives, the relatives of spouses or partners, heterosexual and non-heterosexual friends, faith communities, the LGBT community and the workplace. For coupled respondents, the question wording was “Thinking about your own relationship situation, how much support do you feel for keeping your relationship healthy in good times and hard times from....” Respondents outside of relationships received a similar question: “If you were in a relationship, how much support for keeping that relationship healthy in good times and hard times would you expect from....” For both series of questions, response categories included “no support, very little support, some support, a lot of support,” coded 1 through 4.

Kurdek (2004) found that same-sex couples receive less support from their families, and tend to rely on their friendship networks more heavily, a pattern observed by many researchers (see Herek 2006; Weeks et al. 2001; Nardi 1997; Weston 1991). A similar pattern is present in these data. “Relationship support from friends” was calculated as the mean score of items measuring support from heterosexual and non-heterosexual friends, while “relationship support from family” was calculated as the mean score of items measuring support from respondent’s family and support from spouse or partner’s family. Using a test value of 2.60 (the mean of all respondent support variables, which conceptually falls

between “very little” and “some” support), t-tests revealed that individuals in relationships in this sample perceive significantly stronger support for their relationships from friends,  $t(223)=16.31$ ,  $M=3.31$ ,  $p<.001$ . Support from families was weaker,  $t(223)=1.70$ ,  $M=2.70$ , but the mean difference from the test value did not reach statistical significance.

Though most same-sex couples live outside the “official” or legally-sanctioned marriage system, they do not necessarily live in the absence of social supports for themselves or their relationships. Individuals perceive that their parents and siblings are committed to at least some support of their relationships, but they probably rely on their friends more for such support. Similar analyses showed that individuals may see the LGBT community and the workplace as less supportive of their relationships than might have been expected. Perception of support from the LGBT community was slightly weaker than the test value [ $t(218)=-2.89$ ,  $M=2.41$ ,  $p=.004$ ], as was support for relationships from the workplace [ $t(220)=-2.93$ ,  $M=2.40$ ,  $p=.004$ ]. Unsurprisingly, these results also indicate that individuals can expect significantly less support for their families and relationships from the faith communities in which they grew up, or from the religious organizations that populate their cities and towns today [ $t(205)=-6.31$ ,  $M=2.09$ ,  $p<.001$ ].

### Coupling and Parenting

Whether they live in cities, suburbs, or out in the country, non-heterosexuals have been busy building families, marriage inequality notwithstanding. Of the 466 respondents in this sample, 58.8 percent ( $n=274$ ) are currently in some kind of romantic relationship—a steady dating relationship, domestic partnership, civil union or legal marriage. Only 30.7 percent ( $n=143$ ) are in committed same-sex relationships, i.e., are living with their romantic partners in a marriage, civil union or domestic partnership, compared to 18.2 percent of respondents who are in heterosexually-structured relationships ( $n=85$ ). Marital status in the sample is detailed in Table 6.

Table 6. Marital Status by Gendered Sexual Identity, N=466

	Bisexual men	Bisexual women	Gay men	Lesbian women	Row Totals
Married ( <i>Same-Sex Spouse</i> )	--	1 (.2%)	11 (2.4%)	5 (1.1%)	17 (3.6%)
Married ( <i>Different-Sex Spouse</i> )	13 (2.8%)	30 (6.4%)	10 (2.1%)	--	53 (11.4%)
Separated ( <i>Same-Sex Spouse</i> )	--	1 (.2%)	--	--	1 (.2%)
Separated ( <i>Different-Sex Spouse</i> )	--	2 (.4%)	--	--	2 (.4%)
Divorced ( <i>legal marriage, not civil union</i> )	1 (.2%)	4 (.9%)	2 (.4%)	3 (.6%)	10 (2.1%)
Domestic Partnership ( <i>Different-Sex</i> )	3 (.6%)	28 (6.0%)	--	1 (.2%)	32 (6.9%)
Domestic Partnership ( <i>Same-Sex</i> )	8 (1.7%)	13 (2.8%)	66 (14.2%)	39 (8.4%)	126 (27.0%)
Widowed/Single Survivor	--	--	3 (.6%)	1 (.2%)	4 (.9%)
Single/Dating, Romantic Interest	--	17 (3.6%)	19 (4.1%)	10 (2.1%)	46 (9.9%)
Single and unattached	18 (3.9%)	48 (10.3%)	79 (17.0%)	30 (6.4%)	175 (37.6%)
Totals	43 (9.2%)	144 (30.9%)	190 (40.8%)	89 (19.1%)	466 (100.0%)

About one half of the sample is single, while the other half (48.9%) is married, joined in a civil union or living in a domestic partnership. Among the single respondents ( $n=238$ ), one in five reported a current romantic interest at the time the survey was administered. More than half of these “single and dating” respondents have high hopes for their current dating partner, believing that their relationships perhaps evolve into more permanent relationships that will last longer than five years.

Optimism about intimate relationships is high in this sample across relationship categories. I asked respondents in committed same-sex relationships ( $n=134$ ), “Assuming that you and your partner will live for another 20 years, how long into the future do you

realistically expect to be in this relationship?” Fully 85 percent predicted their relationships would last 10 or more years. Respondents in committed heterosexual relationships ( $n=73$ ) reported a similarly high rate of optimism about the future of their relationships (85.9%). High levels of optimism are closely related to emotional and physical satisfaction, which were measured using items adapted from Lauman, et al. (1994). Optimism for individuals in committed relationships ( $n=217$ ) is strongly correlated with both emotional and physical satisfaction with one’s partner ( $r=.434, p<.001$ ; and  $r=.342, p<.001$ , respectively).

Physical satisfaction—which can be assumed to mean sexual satisfaction—is not nearly so strong as emotional satisfaction in predicting optimism. Love and emotional bonds between individuals and their partners appears to be more important than sex or physical relationships to most participants in this study. I decided to test this proposition. Table 7 shows the results of logistic regression analysis, including regression coefficients, Wald statistics, odds ratios, and 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios for the predictor variable, “High emotional satisfaction” and controlling for age, gender, and sexual identity. Individuals who report high emotional satisfaction are nine times more likely to be most optimistic than those who report lower levels of emotional satisfaction controlling for sexual identity, gender and age.

This strong sense of emotional connection is linked to a desire to marry. More than 77 percent of individuals within same-sex domestic partnerships indicated that their current

Table 7. Logistic Regression of Emotional Satisfaction on Optimism in Committed Relationships ( $n=228$ ), controlling for Sexual Identity, Gender and Age

Variables	B	Wald Chi-Square	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval for Odds Ratio	
				<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Emotional Satisfaction (high)	2.177	23.717**	8.819	3.672	21.178
Control Variables					
<i>Sexual Identity (Gay)</i>	-0.667	1.912	0.513	0.199	1.321
<i>Gender (Man)</i>	-0.030	0.004	0.971	0.368	2.558
<i>Age (under 25)</i>	-2.276	12.969	0.103	0.030	0.354
Constant	1.188	6.857	3.280		

\*\*  $p<.001$



partner was someone they “would like to marry someday,” suggesting a perception among respondents that marital commitment might transform their relationships into something more than they currently are. Commitment among coupled respondents was captured using a 5-point scale developed by Stanley and Markman (1992), which has been used consistently in healthy marriage initiative surveys across the country. Subjects were asked to respond to the following (1) My relationship with my partner/spouse is more important to me than almost anything else in my life; (2) I may not want to be with my partner/spouse a few years from now; (3) I like to think of my partner/spouse and me more in terms of “us” and “we,” rather than “me” and “him/her;” (4) I feel trapped in this relationship but I stay because I have too much to lose if I leave; and (5) We regularly have great conversations where we just talk as good friends. Responses were captured on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, and were modified slightly to read as inclusive of same-sex partners. Reliability analysis of these five items yielded a Cronbach alpha of .7379 for the scale (coupled respondents only,  $n=272$ , missing=2). Scores on the commitment scale ranged from 2 to 25, with a mean score for coupled respondents ( $n=272$ ) of 20.86. The median commitment score for coupled respondents was 21.5. On average, these committed relationships had already lasted between three and five years by the time these data were collected.

I remained concerned about the possible differences between homosexuals and bisexuals. These groups had consistently demonstrated differences, so it stood to reason that homosexuals and bisexuals might approach relationships differently, as well. I compared the commitment scores of coupled bisexuals and homosexuals in an independent-samples  $t$ -test, and found a significant difference between bisexuals ( $M=20.21$ ,  $SD=3.80$ ,  $n=112$ ) and homosexuals [ $M=21.40$ ,  $SD=3.658$ ,  $n=157$ ;  $t(267)=2.581$ ,  $p=.011$ ]. The effect, like most of the differences between these two groups, might seem relatively small, but there is a consistent pattern of significant differences between gays and lesbians and their bisexual counterparts. It would be misleading and an overstatement to interpret this last finding to

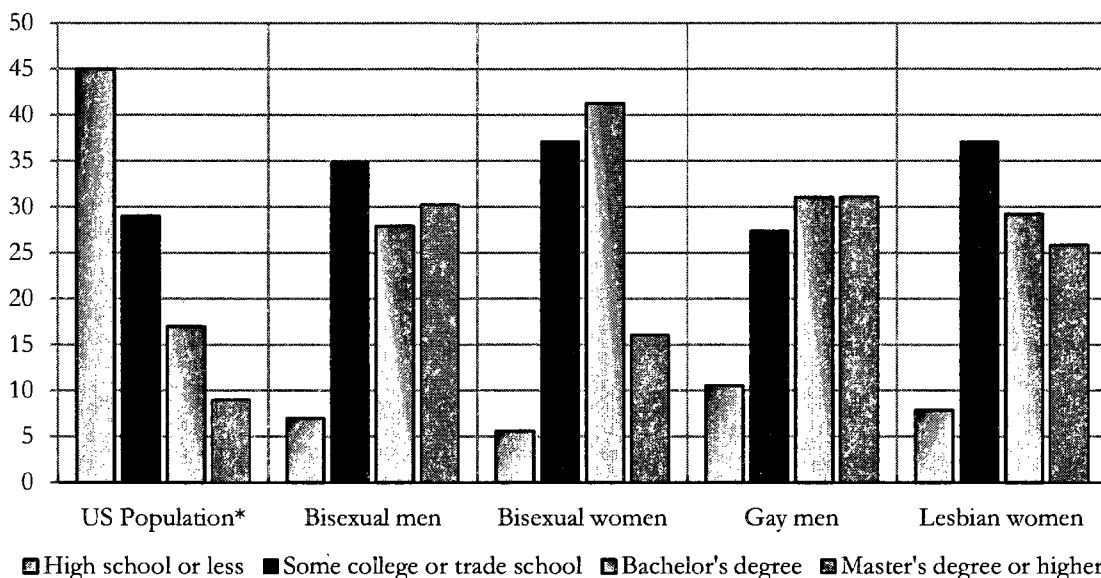
mean that homosexuals are more committed to their relationships than bisexuals. Instead, this finding adds another variable to the list that suggests that the line that divides bisexual from homosexual intimate and family life is fairly bright when all the elements are brought together.

### Education and Student Status

Respondents report very high levels of education compared to national data on educational attainment available from the United States Census American Community Survey (2005). More than half of respondents age 25 and older hold a four-year college degree or graduate degree (69.8 percent,  $n=354$ ), and one-quarter of 18- to 24-year-olds (24.5 percent,  $n=110$ ) have graduated from college. In the US population over age 25, only 28.6 percent hold a bachelor's degree or higher, and among 18- to 24-year-olds just over 9 percent have obtained a four-year degree (Census, 2005 American Community Survey, S1501. Educational Attainment). Figure 4 shows how educational attainment among those over 24 years old is distributed among gendered identity groups in the sample compared to data on the US population.

The youngest participants in the survey are essentially college students. About half of the 18- to 24-year-olds in the sample reported that they had "some college" or a two-year college degree, implying that they are currently enrolled in colleges, universities or trade schools. Among the 83 younger respondents who did not have a four-year college degree, 61 are currently students (part-time,  $n=11$ ; full-time,  $n=50$ ). More than half of those 18 to 24 who already hold bachelor's degrees are apparently students in graduate or professional schools. Only seven individuals reported that they had not completed high school: six 18-year-olds and one 19-year-old. Among those older than 24, only one respondent—a 42-year-old man—reported that he had not graduated from high school. It is possible, since the study was carried out in the spring of 2005, that one or more of the seven younger individuals were still in high school at the time they completed the questionnaire. If this is true, then given

Figure 4. Percentages of US Population\* and *Quest for Quotidian* respondents age 25 and over (n=354) with high school education, two-year, four-year and advanced degrees



\* Source U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey

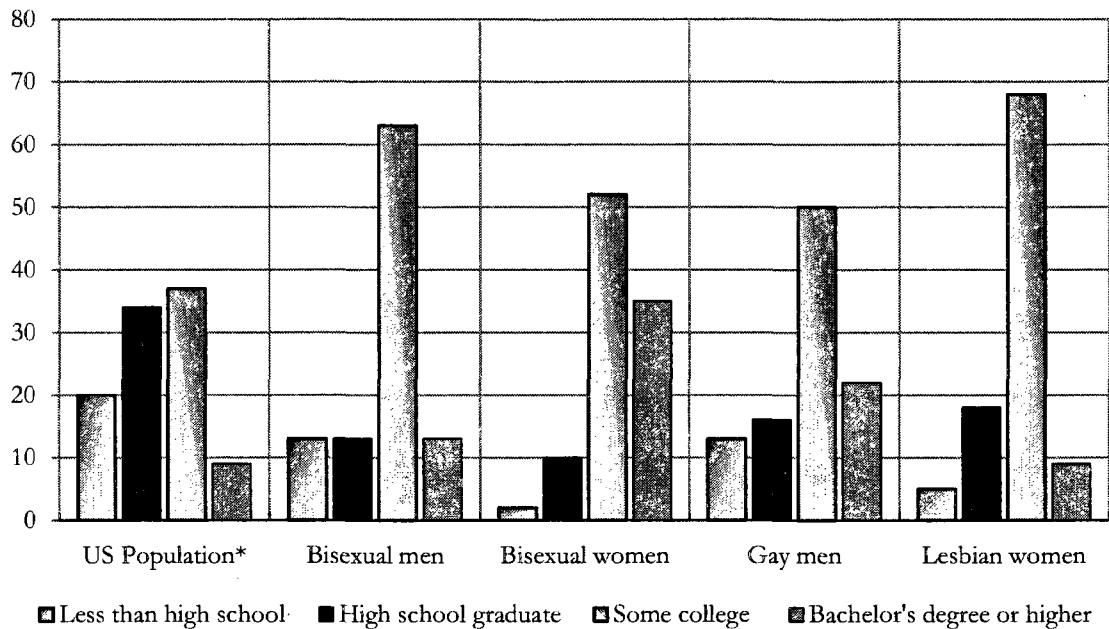
the imputed college enrollment among those in this age group, it is more likely than not that all of the people in this age category will ultimately complete high school and subsequently pursue some sort of post-secondary higher education. Educational attainment among 18- to 24-year-olds in the sample is compared to that in the US population in Figure 5.

The sample includes a very high number of respondents with post-graduate degrees when compared to the US population. According to Census data, only about 10 percent of Americans hold a master's, professional or doctorate degree, compared to 25.4 percent (n=118) of the sample. Notably, about 20 percent of individuals over 25 who currently hold a bachelor's degree report that they are also full- or part-time students. Most of these students are in their late twenties and early thirties.

#### Friends and Social Networks

Friendship networks themselves are at once a comfort and a commodity; connected individuals know they can reach everyone they know via email or text-message if the

Figure 5. Percentages of US Population\* and Quest for Quotidian respondents age 18 to 24 (n=110) with high school education, two-year, four-year and advanced degrees



\* Source U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey

telephone is not an option, and the temporary shortcomings or absence of friends can be rectified through membership in a social network website, a personals site, or a freely-accessible chatroom. For non-heterosexuals, the internet has provided a vastly efficient medium through which lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals can combat isolation and alienation, meet friends, or find potential sexual or romantic partners (Riggle, Rostofsky, and Reedy 2005). That non-heterosexuals rely on the internet so heavily for integrative opportunities is probably related as much to the need for discretion (for those not out) as to the lingering anti-gay hostility or the perception of being unwelcome in their neighborhoods and physical communities.

Weeks, Heaphy, and Donovan (2001) demonstrated that friendship appeared to be the dominant model for intimate relationships among gays and lesbians in the United Kingdom, and others have pointed to a long history of friendship as the social context (perhaps the only available context, in many cases) for same-sex romance and intimacy (Sullivan 1995; Boswell 1994; Weston 1991). If perceptions of openness and patterns of disclosure of sexual identity

are indications, then friends and friendship networks are undeniably important to social life among non-heterosexuals, perhaps even more important than kinship networks. While friendships in the past may have been rooted in shared experience or work, circumscribed by norms of gender or social class, or simply delimited by geographic or social propinquity, friendships today can be maintained across great distances through accessible and affordable transportation and communications technology that has arguably become a central feature of late modern social life and interaction.

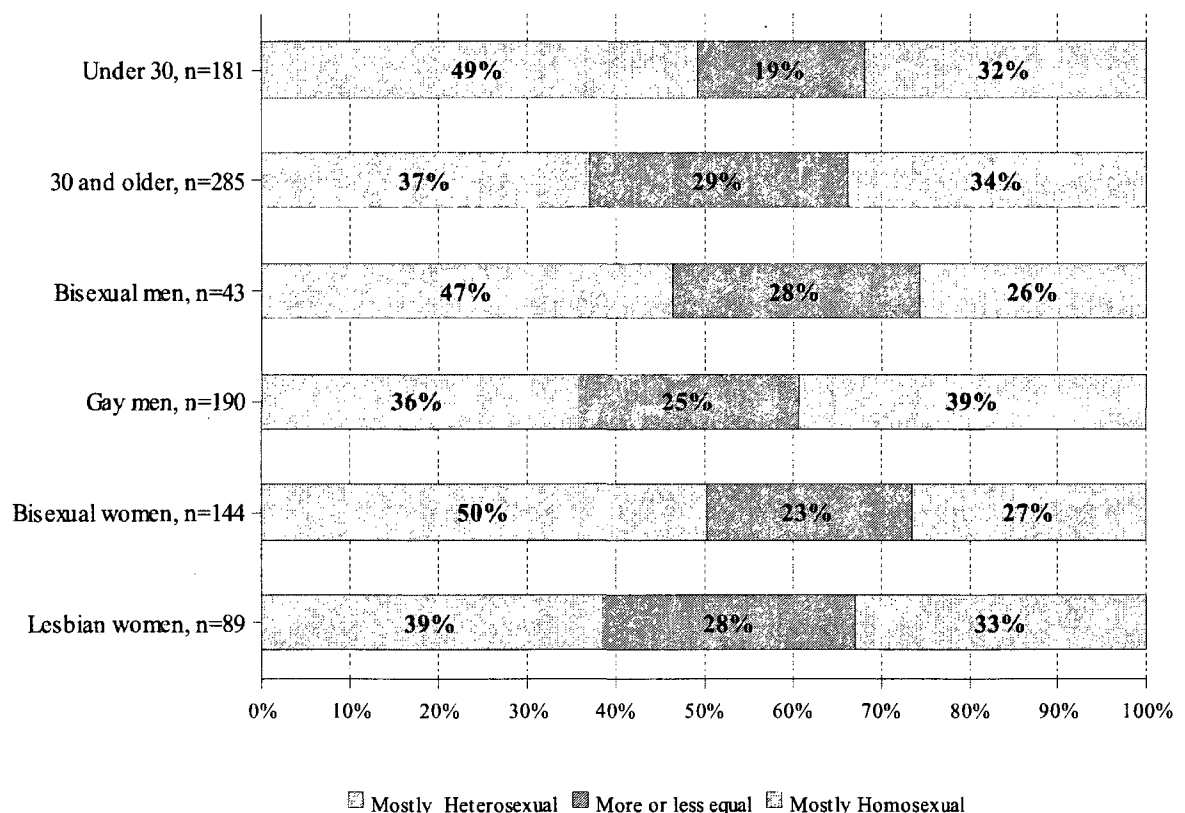
Respondents were asked how many heterosexual and non-heterosexual friends they had, respectively, and responses ranged from none to an unbelievably high 4000. At the risk of sounding dismissive, no one realistically has 4000 friends. Generally, half the sample counted six to ten gay or queer friends, and half the sample counted 11 to 15 straight or heterosexual friends in their network. These data are not terribly useful in their raw form, because they likely overstate the size of friendship networks among younger respondents, or among those who tend to be more avid or enthusiastic users of the internet. To improve the utility of the raw data, I describe the friendship networks of survey respondents in terms of proportions: the proportion of heterosexuals or non-heterosexuals in one's friendship network. These are calculated by summing responses to the two "how many friends" questions, then dividing the number of straight or gay friends by that sum. The resulting variables range in value from zero to one, where one indicates that the respondent has only straight friends on one hand, or only non-heterosexual friends on the other. From these data, I classified respondents' friendship networks as mostly heterosexual, mostly homosexual and—when the proportions for both were between .40 and .60—sexually diverse, wherein homosexuals and heterosexuals were more or less equally distributed within friendship networks (see Figure 6).

One might suspect the friendship networks of individuals who share a marginalized sexual identity to be somewhat homogeneous, delimited by similarities in sexual identity and gender as well as other interests, hobbies or experiences. Homosexuals themselves can be reasonably expected to have more homosexual friends—friends like themselves—than

heterosexual friends, and likewise build gender-delineated friendships based on shared interests and community.

What I found was that about one in four non-heterosexuals have highly integrated friendship networks that include more or less the same number of heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals. This finding implies that for one-quarter of the sample, sexual identity may not translate into residential or social isolation, or “ghettoization” in their social lives, although there is a possibility that ghettoization becomes more pronounced as individuals age. More cynically, it might imply that these people pass more readily in the heterosexual world, but it is possible that these friendship networks describe a level of integration that is made possible through shared values and interests, or other interactions that erase the boundaries—stereotypes, homophobia, etc.—that have historically arisen between non-heterosexuals and straight people. Notably, bisexuals, and especially bisexual women, are

Figure 6. Friendship Networks by Age, and by Gendered Sexual Identity (N=466)



more likely to be in friendship networks dominated by heterosexuals. Approximately half of all bisexuals have more heterosexual friends, and only one in four bisexuals report that homosexuals are more prevalent in their networks. Lesbian and gay respondents' networks are more evenly balanced across the three categories (see Figure 6). The difference between bisexuals and homosexuals with regard to friendship networks may indicate two things about the subpopulations: First, that bisexuals are socially more likely to be influenced by heterosexual values than are homosexuals because of more frequent interaction and engagement; or second, that gay culture and institutions are becoming less powerful or compelling for lesbians and gays, or at least less functional for those who seek long-term marriage-like relationships, or social equality in family policy.

#### Community Involvement and Political Participation

Fewer than 25 percent of respondents described their local communities as “very (queer- or gay-) friendly.” The modal response to this question was “somewhat friendly” ( $n=231$ , or 49.6 percent). Fully one-third of all respondents are unsure whether other non-heterosexual individuals or families live within one mile of their homes. Only about nine percent report that no non-heterosexuals live nearby, just under 30 percent report one to ten non-heterosexual households in their immediate neighborhoods, and 28 percent indicated that they live near more than 10 non-heterosexual households. The latter group's responses suggest that many respondents—but by no means the majority—live in “gay ghettos,” perhaps metropolitan areas with relatively high concentrations of non-heterosexual residents and queer-friendly businesses and organizations.

The data suggest that perceptions of neighborhood friendliness are a reflection of how comfortable or “out” the respondent is. After all, people are no doubt more likely to view a neighborhood or community as friendly if they feel they are among friends, which may not be entirely possible unless queer people are out or visible to the extent that others can react to their public gay, lesbian or bisexual identities. It is unlikely that the friendliness of the

neighborhood is a factor in the personal decision to come out or reveal sexual orientation, but level of disclosure (*disclose*) is positively correlated with perceptions of neighborhood gay-friendliness ( $r=.224, p<.001$ ). People who live where other non-heterosexuals are out and visible are probably more likely to be open about their own sexual identities, and to view their neighborhoods as queer-affirming or friendly. For example, knowledge of or the presence of other non-heterosexual families in the immediate vicinity is very strongly correlated with perceptions of a more friendly neighborhood or community ( $r=.582, p<.001, n=308$ ). But for those outside of such communities, perhaps assessment of friendliness is dependent upon being out, and having contact as queer others with heterosexual people in their neighborhoods, making friends, and changing minds by challenging stereotypes about gay and lesbian identity and lifestyle. It is also possible that individuals who disclose their sexuality or same-sex family structure do so because of a sense of optimism about their ability to integrate into communities, which might lead them to be less likely to anticipate antipathy on the part of their neighbors or other locals. Coming out or being out in the community is strongly correlated with how friendly the atmosphere is perceived to be, and neighborhood friendliness is positively associated both with integration into the queer community and with civic involvement in the community at large.

Community integration is likely to influence attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals. To measure community involvement among non-heterosexuals, I drew upon a widely-used, ten-item Civic Involvement Index (Perkins et al. 1985) which is today associated with the Resident Survey of Neighborhood Conditions (see Nario-Redmond and Coulton 2000; Coulton, Korbin and Su 1996; Pew Research Center 1997). Items include the following:

- Attended a public hearing, town hall meeting, or city council meeting.
- Participated in block groups, neighborhood associations, and/or community action groups.
- Called or sent a letter to an elected public official.



- Spoke to a public official in person.
- Participated in a civic group or fraternal lodge.
- Participated on the board of any local service agency.
- Attended a church or religious service in the neighborhood.
- Attended a PTA meeting.
- Are you currently registered to vote?
- Participated in neighborhood safety or block watch programs.

The Civic Involvement Index is the sum of scores of these ten items. *Affirmative* responses on each item were coded as 1, with negative or “don’t know” responses assigned a value of zero. Missing data were not recoded. A new and different scale was developed for this survey to measure involvement in the LGBT community.

While the Civic Involvement Index measures more traditional community involvement, the Queer Community Integration Index (QCII) developed for this study measures engagement in community institutions and organizations constituted by those who share a marginalized sexual identity. Integration into the queer community is conceived not as an individual sense of belonging to a group, but rather as a set of choices and behaviors that indicate interaction with specifically non-heterosexual social structures, activities and organizations within communities. Subjects were asked to indicate whether the following statements were “never true,” “sometimes true,” or “always true”:

- I seek entertainment exclusively at nightclubs, bars or restaurants serving the queer community
- I shop exclusively at lesbian-owned businesses, like bookshops or other retail outlets
- I seek professional and other services (legal, home repair, medical, plumbing, etc.) from lesbian providers
- I only attend fundraising events hosted by and serving the queer community
- I belong exclusively to political organizations promoting queer issues
- I regularly attend Pride festivals or parades in my community

- I regularly participate in online lesbian, gay or other queer communities
- I would prefer to go on alternative, or gay- or lesbian-oriented vacations
- I regularly participate in gay, lesbian or other queer social clubs, like hiking or camping clubs, sports leagues, gourmet clubs, or reading groups

Affirmative responses to items in the QCII were captured and coded as 1 for “sometimes true,” and 2 for “always true.” Missing and “never true” responses were coded zero. Item scores were summed to yield the QCII. The higher the QCII score, the more integrated into the queer, gay or lesbian community the respondent is likely to be. Reliability analysis of the nine items included in the Queer Community Integration Index yielded a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .8022, indicating a highly reliable degree of internal consistency among the measures. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the ten-item Civic Involvement Index for this sample ( $n=455$ ) was .6747.

#### *Civic Involvement*

For those 25 and older, the mean score on the Civic Involvement Index was 3.42 with a standard deviation of 2.01, while for those under 25 the mean was 2.52 with standard deviation of 1.851. While the difference between mean civic involvement scores is significant [ $t(464)=-4.194, p<.001$ ], the effect is relatively small ( $\eta^2=.04$ ). That individuals who are older are more active in civic life is something we should expect. Older individuals have moved out on their own, have married and possibly divorced, have begun building or retired from careers, are perhaps parents themselves, own homes, or have established themselves within their neighborhoods and communities. A larger concern might be that these scores seem somewhat low, but a closer look at the items themselves suggests certain biases that non-heterosexual people might have difficulty overcoming.

The language of these particular questions is somewhat dated and exclusionary at times, and because the survey was self-administered, some respondents may have had difficulty translating the questions so that they could answer. For example, in a face-to-face interview, the interviewer could clarify terms like “civic organization”—the Jaycees, for example—or

the sexist “fraternal lodge”—the Elks, or the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). That these types of organizations might be less than welcoming to gay or lesbian members is obvious, historically. The Jaycees, or Junior Chamber International, only admitted women as members in 1984 after being ordered to do so by the courts, and the ban on gays in the military—the Clinton-era “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy notwithstanding—clearly suggests that “real” veterans are heterosexual.

As far as participation in church or parent-teacher association meetings, I would not expect high levels of participation from individuals in my sample. Only a few mainstream dominations in the United States take a sympathetic stance toward the LGBT community, while the most vocal religious leaders and institutions tend to set a tone of intolerance and hatred toward non-heterosexuals in public discourse. Participation in a local PTA chapter presupposes that the respondent is a parent and/or an educator herself. Indeed, more than one-third of all gay and lesbian respondents who have attended a PTA meeting recently ( $n=27$ ) are themselves in the business of education as teachers, instructors or administrators. Fifteen lesbian and gay parents to minor children have recently attended a PTA meeting, but only two report to be employed in education. Apparently, involvement in certain areas of civic life is sometimes a frightening leap of faith into a hostile environment, or just part of the job.

#### *Queer Community Integration*

Gay and lesbian scores on the QCII ranged from 0 to 17, and were normally distributed around a mean of 6.7 ( $n=279$ ;  $M=6.72$ ,  $SD=3.522$ ). The mean QCII for bisexuals ( $n=187$ ;  $M=4.91$ ,  $SD=3.543$ ) was significantly lower than for homosexuals [ $t(464)=-5.440$ ,  $p=.000$ ,  $\eta^2=.06$ ]. That lesbian and gay people appear to be more integrated than bisexual men and women into the queer community is unsurprising, given the differences between levels of disclosure and perceptions of openness that exist between these groups. What is fascinating is the normal distribution of QCII scores, particularly among lesbian and gay respondents.

Very few individuals are completely isolated from participation in the queer community, and about the same number of individuals report that they essentially segregate themselves from non-essential interaction with mainstream heterosexual/heterosexist institutions and social structures.

More than the distribution of the Civic Involvement Index, the variability in QCII scores calls into question the shrill characterization of the queer community as a unified cultural and political force with a radical “agenda” for the transformation of American family and society. To argue that LGBT individuals are exclusively committed to queer community concerns, to a specific stereotypical queer lifestyle, or to a particular range of behaviors or interests driven solely by sexual identity is simply unsupportable. It seems all too obvious from the data here that there is more to people’s lives than their sexuality, even though sexual identity plays an undeniably important role in staking out opportunities for friendship, shopping, recreation, and building intimate relationships and families.

#### *Politics and Party*

Non-heterosexuals are active members of their communities, and their activities within their neighborhoods or cities must be informed by their personal political sensibilities and beliefs. Often political activism on the part of lesbian, gay or bisexual people in the interest of equality or justice is interpreted by opponents as part of the larger queer conspiracy, so not only are homosexuals themselves condemned as “unnatural” or evil, but any effort to address social inequality, discrimination or violence against non-heterosexuals through the political process is likewise derided or attacked by the conservative right. Homosexuals are cast as stalwarts of the Democratic Party in the United States, and characterized as invariably “liberal” by more conservative forces in American politics. Where non-heterosexuals are concerned, the animus of social conservatives, religious fundamentalists, or other anti-gay activists does not stop with the banter and name-calling that represents the ideological divide between political opponents. In the hateful rhetoric of the “homosexual agenda,” gays and lesbians are portrayed as insidious and evil, a force that has quietly corrupted not only the

Democratic Party but the entire political process. While gays and lesbians are represented in all major US political parties—Log Cabin Republicans, for example, is an organization for gay conservatives—the Democratic Party is more likely than others to attract non-heterosexual constituents. It is also true that non-heterosexuals are likely to be more liberal than the general population, but this is not because there is a secret plan to take over the world. It is because the more conservative positions on most social and family issues are positions that either exclude or harm lesbian, gay or bisexual individuals or their families.

Fortunately for non-heterosexuals, the rhetorical strategy to undermine queer politics and activism has not been as successful as its adherents would like. *Quest for Quotidian* data indicate that non-heterosexuals remain engaged in their communities and politically active: they have a diverse politics of their own, and they vote. At the time data were collected in 2005, 91 percent of the sample was registered to vote. Ninety-three percent of voters registered in 2005 had also voted in the prior year's presidential election that swept George W. Bush into office for a second term (86 percent of all respondents voted in the 2004 election). The majority of registered voters in the sample claimed they were Democrats (58.1 percent,  $n=244$ ), but a sizable number defined themselves in the survey as Libertarians (26 percent,  $n=109$ ). Republicans made up less than 5 percent ( $n=20$ ) of the sample, slightly less than Green Party adherents ( $n=21$ ), but more than self-proclaimed independents ( $n=11$ ) or those who reported other political affiliations, e.g., anarchists and socialists ( $n=15$ ). Party affiliation or association, along with respondent-provided characterizations of their personal political beliefs, are summarized in Table 8.

Fewer than two-thirds of respondents consider themselves “Democrats,” a finding that seriously undermines the claim that that non-heterosexuals share a uniform political philosophy, much less subscribe to a collective political “agenda.” Still, when asked to describe their politics, 47 percent indicated that their politics were “very liberal,” 33 percent were “somewhat liberal,” 16 percent claimed they were politically “moderate,” and 3.4 percent described their politics as “somewhat conservative.” No one in the survey claimed to

be “very conservative.” While eighty percent of respondents ( $n=373$ ) described their politics as liberal, as opposed to moderate or conservative, perhaps the liberal label is misleading. Given that political philosophies in the sample are diverse and not uniform, it is possible that gay and lesbian people, whose interests are best served by liberal thinking if not liberal politics, might be inclined to *automatically* define themselves as liberal, regardless of which political party or philosophy holds their loyalty. If lesbian, gay and bisexual people—as marginalized second-class citizens—are by definition liberal but not necessarily Democrats, then their “somewhat liberal” views might be more similar to those of moderates than to those who claim a “very liberal” political stance.

Gay men and lesbian women are twice as likely as their bisexual counterparts to identify as Democrats, but sexual identity is not a strong predictor of “very liberal” politics. Instead, binary logistic regression models indicate that gender is the strongest of three predictors (including sexuality and age) that respondents will describe their political views as “very liberal.” Neither gender nor sexuality tend to explain much of the variance in the sample. The model predicting Democratic party association explains about 6 percent of the variance at best (Cox & Snell  $R^2=.044$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2=.059$ ), while the model predicting respondents will be “very liberal” explains even less—at most, still less than 3 percent of the variance (Cox & Snell  $R^2=.021$ , Nagelkerke  $R^2=.028$ ).

Table 8. Political Beliefs within Party Affiliation Among Non-Heterosexuals

Party Affiliation	Political Beliefs			
	Somewhat Conservative	Moderate	Somewhat Liberal	Very Liberal
All Respondents, N=462	3.5%	16.2%	33.3%	47.0%
Democrats, n=256	1.2%	12.5%	36.7%	49.6%
Libertarians, n=129	3.1%	17.1%	38.0%	41.9%
Green Party, n=27	-	7.4%	14.8%	77.8%
Republicans, n=21	42.9%	42.9%	4.8%	9.5%
Other parties, n=16	-	6.3%	18.8%	75.0%
Independents, n=13	-	69.2%	23.1%	7.7%

In this chapter, I have shown that *Quest for Quotidian* respondents represent a cross-section of non-heterosexuals in the United States, albeit the non-random nature of the sample undermines any claim that results from this study are reliably generalizable to the population. Nevertheless, the sample is sufficient to tell a compelling story about attitudes toward marriage among gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Certainly, the biases in this sample are no more or less compelling than those in other studies.

While racial and ethnic diversity is weak, the sample includes an otherwise geographically, demographically, and politically diverse group of non-heterosexuals who appear to be living rather mundane lives, not so very different from their privileged heterosexual neighbors, friends and coworkers. They are not disproportionately unhappy or dissatisfied with their lives. Individuals in this study have reported that their parents and siblings are generally supportive of their private lives and intimate relationships, although like most non-heterosexuals many have had to rely more often on their friends for social support. Gay, lesbian and bisexual people in this sample grew up in more or less traditional families characterized by stable marriages and, in most cases, a typical commitment to religion and education. Participants in this survey are somewhat better-educated than the general population, and the incomes reported here are somewhat higher than the national average. Still, the survey captured respectable ranges of educational attainment and income. Across these various strata, individuals in the sample are economically and politically active in their communities, a number of individuals have made homes for themselves and their partners, and many are quietly but not secretly raising children in neighborhoods that are not particularly well-known for their annual Gay Pride parades.

Much of the success of anti-gay initiatives and activism aimed at denying equality to gays and lesbians can be explained by the successful promotion of questionable claims that there are fundamental differences in the lifestyles and values of heterosexuals and homosexuals; that lesbians and gays are deviant, or damaged in some way by a failure of socialization or a trauma in the past; that same-sex desire is somehow synonymous with a desire to destroy

families rather than create them. This sample challenges the broad brush that specifically paints lesbians and gays as so alien that they must by their very existence be “anti-marriage” or “anti-family.” Analyses of the data from this sample show that gays and lesbians might hold value orientations and attitudes that are more similar to heterosexuals than they are to bisexuals, that marriage means different things to different groups within the non-heterosexual population, or that the commitment to values traditionally associated with marriage is stronger among gays and lesbians than among bisexuals, many of whom have already exercised the right to marry. This might mean that marriage advocates have been punishing allies, not enemies, in the struggle to strengthen marriage, by denying lesbians and gays a shot at life on the quotidian—the “normal” life promised by legal marriage.



## CHAPTER SIX

### NOT-SO-QUEER ATTITUDES

#### TOWARD MARRIAGE

In 2005, the National Fatherhood Initiative published *With This Ring...A National Survey on Marriage in America*, conducted by sociologist Norval D. Glenn, based on survey data collected via telephone interviews of a random national sample of 1503. The NFI study included many of the same items used in this research, including items from marriage surveys conducted in Oklahoma and Florida (Johnson, et al. 2001, Winston, et al. 1999). The NFI survey was conducted between December 2003 and February 2004, the year leading up to the 2004 presidential election in which same-sex marriage would ultimately be a significant issue (Lewis 2005), and force many in the electorate to evaluate their own “pro-marriage” attitudes against the possibility (or threat) of legal same-sex marriage. The political rhetoric and public scrutiny of marriage was likely driven by the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts (*Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* 2003), and the landmark United States Supreme Court decision (*Lawrence v. Texas* 2003) that struck down state sodomy statutes long held to be explicitly anti-gay, and may have intensified a sense of familism among survey respondents. Given the period in which the NFI survey was conducted—a time when marriage attitudes in the general population might be particularly strong, and just a year before *Quest for Quotidian* was launched—Glenn’s research report serves as the basis for comparing the strength of non-heterosexual attitudes and beliefs toward marriage to the strength of heterosexual marriage in the United States.

In all, the *Quest for Quotidian* online survey included 27 indicators of attitudes toward marriage. Seventeen items measured the degree support for norms and values such as

monogamy, fidelity, assumptions of marital permanence, relative ease of divorce, the importance of marriage to parents and children, etc. Seventeen of the measures are drawn from recent surveys exploring the strength of marriage across the United States, including surveys conducted to support Healthy Marriage Initiatives in a number of states, such as Oklahoma, Florida, and Alabama (Glenn 2005; Karney 2003; Johnson, et al. 2001; Winston, et al. 1999; Nock 1995; Booth et al. 1983). Most individual items were taken verbatim from existing surveys. Table 9 shows the mean scores and standard deviations on each item for the sample, and for gay men, lesbian women, bisexual men and bisexual women. In consideration of the target population of the study, ten additional items were adapted to be more sensitive to non-heterosexual respondents. Means and standard deviations on each of these items are shown in Table 10. These additional reworded questions measure concepts already captured by the original items with established validity and reliability. All items were measured on a five-point scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree,” including a neutral “neither agree/disagree” category. Responses were coded such that the higher the score, the stronger the commitment to the more traditional position on the value in question.

One goal of this research is to measure the strength of support among non-heterosexuals for what is and has been culturally defined as marriage, regardless of the critique that marriage is heterosexist in its assumptions. This research assumes that answers to the general question, “What does marriage mean to homosexuals?” fall along a continuum between strong support and weak support for traditional values about the marital contract or its importance to society. While analysis of each attitude measure might seem prudent and interesting, this report will focus on particular attitudes that are often at the center of controversy or contention in the family debates in the United States. In the pages that follow, I examine a range of attitudes toward marriage that reflect the “family values” of non-heterosexuals in the United States, with an eye toward understanding some of the major

Table 9. Means and standard deviations for items measuring attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals

Survey Items	Full Sample (n=466)		Bisexual Men (n=43)		Bisexual Women (n=144)		Gay Men (n=190)		Lesbian Women (n=89)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. In the absence of violence and extreme conflict, parents who have an unsatisfactory marriage should stay together until their children are grown.	2.13	1.145	2.56	1.161	2.14	1.068	2.17	1.205	1.81	1.054
2. Divorce is a serious national problem in the United States today.	3.56	1.261	3.40	1.383	3.34	1.312	3.72	1.141	3.63	1.318
3. Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get.	2.22	1.274	2.12	1.173	1.99	1.184	2.51	1.357	2.07	1.201
4. Couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances.	3.18	1.413	2.98	1.336	3.08	1.366	3.30	1.425	3.20	1.494
5. Given how long people are living these days, it is unrealistic to expect a couple to remain married to one another for life.	3.27	1.299	3.21	1.337	3.05	1.270	3.45	1.270	3.30	1.352
6. Most married couples I know have happy, healthy marriages.	3.28	1.019	3.28	.959	3.19	1.058	3.46	.997	3.06	.981
7. Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution.	3.29	1.274	3.21	1.264	3.06	1.286	3.43	1.273	3.42	1.223
8. Couples who have children together ought to be married.	2.61	1.269	2.77	1.360	2.53	1.212	2.66	1.291	2.54	1.280
9. Fathers are as important as mothers for the proper development of children.	3.74	1.283	4.16	1.045	3.80	1.232	3.87	1.276	3.17	1.325
10. If they are determined to do so, divorced couples can parent as effectively as can most parents who live together.	1.75	.970	1.67	.969	1.70	.993	1.83	.941	1.72	1.000
11. It should be harder for parents of children under age 18 to get a divorce than it is for couples who do not have young children.	1.91	1.145	2.30	1.282	1.73	.943	2.05	1.286	1.72	.965
12. All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father.	2.27	1.229	2.33	1.375	2.28	1.187	2.40	1.238	1.96	1.167

Table 9. Means and standard deviations for items measuring attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals, continued

Survey Items	Full Sample (n=466)		Bisexual Men (n=43)		Bisexual Women (n=144)		Gay Men (n=190)		Lesbian Women (n=89)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
13. Sure, divorce is bad, but a lousy marriage is even worse.	1.50	.760	1.65	.813	1.49	.709	1.50	.823	1.46	.675
14. Too many couples rush into marriage.	4.41	.786	4.35	.752	4.41	.797	4.45	.760	4.37	.845
15. It is wrong when married people have sex with someone other than their spouse.	3.34	1.429	2.98	1.504	2.57	1.403	3.65	1.242	4.12	1.156
16. In marriage you can count on your partner being there for you more than you can when you are living with someone outside of marriage.	2.73	1.366	2.74	1.255	2.53	1.310	2.97	1.425	2.54	1.315
17. These days, couples who live together outside of marriage get all the benefits of marriage without the legal details.	4.11	1.187	4.12	1.159	4.15	1.111	4.11	1.177	4.03	1.344

Table 10. Means and standard deviations for adapted items measuring attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals

Survey Items adapted for Non-Heterosexuals	Full Sample (n=466)		Bisexual Men (n=43)		Bisexual Women (n=144)		Gay Men (n=190)		Lesbian Women (n=89)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Too many lesbian and gay couples move in with each other too soon after they meet.	3.30	1.008	3.14	.833	3.08	.912	3.32	1.091	3.71	.932
2. It is wrong for gays and lesbians to have sex with others when they are in a committed relationship.	3.37	3.300	3.14	1.407	2.77	1.377	3.54	1.258	4.08	1.180
3. Most lesbian and gay couples I know have happy, healthy relationships.	3.93	.876	3.77	.812	4.02	.806	3.92	.964	3.88	.809
4. For same-sex couples, having the right to form civil unions is just as good as being able to marry.	3.84	1.347	3.60	1.383	4.12	1.106	3.65	1.465	3.90	1.357
5. Marriage is for straight people, not gay or lesbian people.	4.62	.847	4.56	.765	4.77	.707	4.47	1.017	4.74	.613
6. Committed, same-sex relationships last just as long as most heterosexual marriages.	4.30	1.002	4.00	.976	4.48	.863	4.15	1.127	4.47	.854
7. The gay and lesbian community is very supportive of long-term committed relationships.	3.89	1.022	3.95	.950	4.01	.939	3.65	1.123	4.16	.851
8. All things being equal, it would be better for children of gays and lesbians to be raised in a household where their same-sex parents are married, not just living together.	3.73	1.175	3.70	1.186	3.67	1.159	3.82	1.168	3.65	1.216
9. It is better to be able to exit a relationship without having to go through the legal hassles of divorce or dissolution.	3.27	1.155	3.05	1.112	3.21	1.158	3.32	1.158	3.39	1.164
10. Most lesbians and gays prefer the single life.	3.87	.990	3.63	1.047	3.92	.939	3.76	1.032	4.12	.902

differences in values that set non-heterosexuals apart from heterosexuals, and differentiate some non-heterosexuals from others. Specifically, I will examine several themes that tend to be nearly universal in scholarly discussions of “pro-marriage” attitudes: (1) the social relevance of marriage, (2) marital permanence and durability; (3) marriage and the welfare of children; (4) marriage as necessary to good parenting; (5) the centrality of monogamy; (6) taking marriage seriously; and (7) divorce as a social problem.

### The Social Relevance of Marriage

In *Quest for Quotidian*, a large majority of respondents reject the idea that “most gays and lesbians prefer the single life” (65.9%,  $n=466$ ; only 7.9% agreed with the statement). Nevertheless, only about half of all respondents were married, in civil unions or in domestic partnerships at the time of the survey. Of the 238 single respondents, 88 (37%) were individuals under age 25. Only seven of these 88 younger respondents were dating or seeing someone, leaving 81 individuals who were neither involved in nor pursuing a relationship, although one was separated and exiting a relationship, and another was single due to the death of a partner. Forty-five of these under-25 respondents reported being under 21, which perhaps suggests that many of the younger respondents, much like their heterosexual counterparts, might place a lower priority on serious relationships than on moving out on their own, attending college or university, building their careers, or otherwise delaying anything that might look like marriage until a later stage in their lives. This makes inclusion of this younger group somewhat suspect when speculating about the extent to which all non-heterosexuals are committed to singlehood.

On the other hand, older respondents have presumably had ample opportunity to assess their desire or need for an intimate relationship. Sixty-three percent ( $n=150$ ) of the 238 single respondents were individuals age 25 or older who were either dating ( $n=39$ ), separated ( $n=1$ ), divorced ( $n=10$ ), were single after the death of a partner ( $n=3$ ), or for whatever reason

were not pursuing a romantic relationship ( $n=96$ ). Discounting those who are dating, those who have demonstrated a recent commitment to a relationship (single, divorced, and widowed), and all respondents under 25, we are left with only 96 individuals (20.6 percent of the entire sample) who appear to have no interest in seeking a steady relationship. Based on this number, I cautiously conclude that only about 1 in 5 individuals might arguably be committed to a “single” lifestyle.

The rejection of singlehood as a preferred status is supported by an additional finding that fully 90 percent of all respondents disagreed that “marriage is for straight people, not gay or lesbian people.” Gay and lesbian people, according to these findings, have a relatively positive view of marriage as a flexible institution that can and should accommodate the lives they are already living, and the relationships they are seeking or maintaining. The items measuring rejection of singlehood and acceptance of marriage are significantly correlated ( $r=.257, p<.001, n=465$ ). At the very least, these findings challenge the stereotype that describes non-heterosexuals as committed to a life devoid of intimate relationships, or to ideologies that minimize the importance of marriage to individuals. While these items do not necessarily measure the social relevance of marriage, together they suggest that if it were available, marriage would be an attractive alternative to a large number of gays and lesbians.

My question is whether non-heterosexuals view marriage as hip, fashionable and functional today. Such a position would reflect what most consider a “pro-marriage” attitude, in line with traditionalist or politically-conservative views of marriage. In the *Quest for Quotidian* sample, 31 percent agreed that “marriage was an old-fashioned, outmoded institution,” 49.1 percent disagreed, and 19 percent were undecided ( $n=464$ ). Compared to the NFI study (Glenn 2005), in which 88 percent of Americans took the pro-marriage position on this item, these numbers are relatively low. It would likely be a mistake, however, to assume the finding that almost half of non-heterosexuals believe marriage remains a relevant institution is a sign of weak support for marriage. Any assessment of the institution

by members of this population would almost certainly be influenced by the lack of access to marriage, as well as the history of exclusion from it that so many gays and lesbians have experienced.

Non-heterosexual people see value and meaning in marriage. Arguably, the value of marriage might be reduced, for many, to the myriad social and governmental benefits associated with marital status, despite the romance rhetoric deployed in the public discourse that emphasizes love and emotional bonds between same-sex partners. Sixty-nine percent disagreed overall, and 45 percent strongly disagreed, that “for same-sex couples, having the right to form civil unions is just as good as being able to marry.” Responses to this item indicate that while civil unions such as those available in Vermont are essentially the legal equivalent of marriage, most non-heterosexuals may perceive civil unions as inferior to legal marriage.

The community is arguably divided over whether marriage or civil unions offer the better opportunity for family-building among same-sex couples, but it seems likely that the majority of non-heterosexuals believe the current situation in which most same-sex couples have no legal standing at all is untenable. Overall, more than 69 percent of respondents report that the gay community is supportive of long-term, committed relationships, and when I asked respondents to identify the best policy option for defining same-sex committed relationships, the results favored legal marriage over civil unions for gays and lesbians by a wide majority (83 percent, compared to only 14.8 percent who believed that civil unions would be preferable to legal marriage). Less than 2 percent of respondents—only eight individuals—rejected both marriage and civil unions, while 98 percent of the sample opted for some form of legal recognition of same-sex relationships for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Members of this population arguably see marriage as a better way, and perhaps the best way, to promote, secure and support long-term relationships between partners. This position is hardly different from the position held by most activists who oppose extending marriage rights to same-sex partners.



Most non-heterosexuals in the sample—like the majority of heterosexuals—imagine marriage to be a source of satisfaction and happiness. About half of the respondents reported that most married couples they knew had happy marriages, a number that might seem a bit low. When asked the same question about the gay and lesbian couples they know, about 75 percent responded that same-sex couples in their social networks were in happy, healthy relationships. The differences in responses here might best be explained in terms of social networks: non-heterosexuals may interact with fewer heterosexual couples, or perhaps are less likely to be close enough to these couples to judge their happiness or unhappiness. Of course, neither of these numbers necessarily is an accurate measure of the quality of relationships within respondents' social networks. Rather, response patterns for these items give us some indication as to how optimistically the members of marginalized sexual communities represented in this study view committed relationships—whether they are marriages or not.

Any direct comparison to aggregate heterosexual attitude scores such as those reported in the National Fatherhood Initiative study is somewhat suspect, and certainly makes the attitudes of *Quest for Quotidian* participants seem decidedly less supportive of marriage than the attitudes of the general population. Making such comparisons irresponsibly or without proper specification could lead some to believe that allowing same-sex marriage would dilute the ideological foundation upon which marriage and its concomitant social benefits depend is justified, when the evidence here does not support such a conclusion at all. What we know from this research is that while many lesbians, gays and bisexuals have grown up looking at their future and current intimate relationships through the prism of marriagelessness that isolated homosexual from heterosexual relationship options, they have not necessarily grown up with a warped or atypical view of marriage.

In fact, it appears from these data that on the whole, non-heterosexuals hold positive, supportive attitudes toward the idea and institution of marriage, even though most are excluded from it by law and custom. With regard to the social relevance of marriage, it is safe

to say that to a substantial proportion of the non-heterosexual population represented in this sample, marriage is viewed positively, as an important and functional institution, and also as a form of intimate or family relationship that is preferable to other dyadic family forms. This orientation toward marriage—found in individuals as well as the lesbian and gay community, according to respondents—reflects values and attitudes that most Americans would consider more traditional than radical.

### Marital Permanence and Durability

Non-heterosexuals see very little difference between same-sex relationships and traditional “marriage.” More than 80 percent of respondents agreed that “committed, same-sex relationships last just as long as most heterosexual marriages.” In this study I approximate marital status for statistical purposes by defining as “married” anyone in a committed, coresidential relationship with a primary romantic partner. While some might object, I do not believe that equating cohabitation with legal marriage dilutes the definition of marriage, especially for individuals in same-sex relationships. In most states and municipalities in the United States, formal or informal domestic partnerships are the only options available to lesbians and gays who want to be or start families of their own. Without marriage equality, cohabitation for many is as close to marriage as same-sex relationships can get. Among the 466 individuals who make up the *Quest for Quotidian* sample, 228 (49 percent) are in marriages or marriage-like relationships—unrecognized marriages, civil unions and domestic partnerships—that are demonstrably different than friendship or “dating.” It should come as no surprise that in the absence of marriage, members of this population place their faith in the next best thing.

### *Different-Sex Relationships*

About 19 percent ( $n=87$ ) of all respondents are currently in different-sex relationships, most of which are marriages ( $n=53$ ) between the bisexual respondent and a different-sex partner. Of 228 coupled respondents (married, or in a civil union, domestic partnership or

dating relationship; separated respondents are not counted as coupled), 37 percent ( $n=85$ ) are in relationships with different-sex partners. Two thirds of these are currently in heterosexual-styled (man-woman) marriages, while the other third are cohabitating with their different-sex partners.

A small minority (12.9%,  $n=11$ ) of those in heterosexual relationships are homosexual: one lesbian woman lives in a domestic partnership with a man, and ten individuals—all men who identify as gay, some closeted, some not—are legally married to women. These are unusual marriages, and unfortunately, our data do not reveal much about these relatively unique configurations, except that most of them feature a non-monogamous relationship style of some type. The relationship styles appear to be an accommodation of the mismatch of sexual identity between the partners in these marriages, but for most do not seem to have an adverse effect on the stability or longevity of these marriages. The mean age of these ten married gay men is 51, and all but one of them—the youngest, who at 25 is more than 20 years younger than the next older respondent in this group—have been married for at least 11 years. In fact, eight report that they have been married for twenty years or more, with no expectation that their marriages will end any time soon. These ten men—the oldest of whom was 68 at the time of data collection—appear to be more open about their sexuality ( $M=3.5$ ) than are bisexual men in the sample living with or married to women ( $M=2.69$ ,  $n=16$ ). These mean scores suggest that the married gay men are out in multiple domains—friends, family, work and/or community. Only one of the married men who identified himself as gay has disclosed his sexual identity only to friends but not to members of his immediate family, a pattern which implies that this particular respondent is closeted, and unwilling to risk his long-term marriage by coming out publicly as homosexual.

Higgins' (2004) research demonstrates that relatively little is known about why non-heterosexual men marry in the first place, much less remain in heterosexual marriages. Analyzing a sample of 69 previously-married and never-married MSM (men who are same-

sex attracted), Higgins found that neither sexual orientation (whether someone is gay or bisexual), internalized homophobia, childhood experiences, nor psychological maladjustment accounted for non-heterosexual men's marital decisions. The only variable that significantly influenced men's decisions to marry at some point was religiosity of family of origin—that is, the more fundamentalist were a subject's parents, the more likely the subject was to have been married (Higgins 2004). No comparable data are available in this survey that would allow me to determine reliably whether the factors Higgins examined figured into the marital decisions of the admittedly small group of married men in my study. Examining in detail the question of why non-heterosexual men marry women is beyond the scope of this research, but it is within bounds to speculate as to why gay and bisexual men might stay in such marriages. The *Quest for Quotidian* data show that all ten gay men and three of four of the bisexual men in heterosexual marriages are parents to at least one child, the majority are in stable marriages, and most of these men appear to be committed to staying married. Perhaps for them, marriage is a durable institution in which they have not only been husbands, but also fathers.

Coupled bisexual men are, on average, about six years younger ( $M=44.5$  years) than the married gay men, but more than half of them have already been married more than ten years. Like the gay married men, bisexual married men are optimistic about their current marriages: only 2 of 16 reported that their relationships would not last beyond ten years. Notably, because they are in marriages that appear normatively heterosexual, these men probably do not experience the same forms of discrimination as men who choose to enter committed same-sex relationships. The bisexual married men are similar to the gay married men in one other important way: most prefer relationship styles that are not strictly monogamous—their marriages are more “open” in terms of sexual boundaries.

#### *Same-Sex Relationships*

The other coupled respondents (63%,  $n=143$ ) are in same-sex committed relationships—mostly domestic partnerships that fall under my expanded definition of marriage—including

85 gay couples and 58 lesbian couples. About 80 percent of these relationships have lasted at least 3 years. The majority (55%) of respondents in same-sex relationships lasting fewer than three years were themselves younger—between the ages of 18 and 35, when individuals are more likely to be seeking spouses or long-term romantic partners, and more likely to be closer to the beginning of long-term relationships and their family lives.

Personal marital histories may shed light on the degree to which non-heterosexuals view marriage as durable. A history of divorce might explain why some groups or individuals hold weaker attitudes toward marital permanence. In this sample, about one in five respondents overall (48 women and 32 men) were in heterosexual marriages at some point in their lives, and prior to their current relationships. Of the men and women men with marital histories, only about one third of the women ( $n=15$ ) and one half of the men ( $n=16$ ) are currently in same-sex committed relationships today. The rest are either single, remarried or in civil unions, or living in domestic partnerships. Previously-married gay men outnumber previously married bisexual men three to one, but are not significantly more likely to have been married. On the other hand, bisexual women are more likely than lesbian women to have been married, but again, the relationship is not significant.

#### *Attitude Measures*

Two items in the survey address the norm of permanence in the marital relationship for all respondents. These items, like all attitudinal indicators here, are measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where the higher the score, the stronger the support for traditional marriage values or beliefs. The first item captures the degree to which individuals believe that marriage creates a more stable or dependable relationship between two people, so that agreement with the statement, “In marriage, you can count on your partner being there for you more than you can when you are living with someone outside of marriage,” signals stronger commitment to a pro-marriage position. The second item, “Couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another to be broken only under extreme circumstances,” captures the degree to which individuals adhere to the cultural belief that marriage is

“forever,” a relatively unbreakable bond between two people. Agreement with this statement indicates a stronger, more traditional pro-marriage attitude. These two items are significantly correlated ( $r=.224$ ,  $p<.01$ ,  $n=466$ ), but the relationship is not as strong as one might expect.

One might think that belief in lifelong marriage would presume a partner on whom one could depend before all others, but there is a great deal of ambivalence in these data. For each of these items, between 14 and 19 percent of all respondents selected the neutral response category, “neither agree nor disagree.” The response patterns on these variables indicate that a substantial number of respondents might not, in fact, see marriage as particularly strong. For example, those who believe that marriage should not necessarily last a lifetime represent 35.4 percent of the sample ( $M=3.18$ ). Only 33.7 percent of the sample believe that marriage makes for more supportive and responsive spouses ( $M=2.73$ ). Almost 19 percent are ambivalent or uncertain, but tellingly, more than 47 percent disagree that a married spouse is more likely to “be there” when the going gets tough. Scores affirming marriage on the other item are distributed more or less evenly: Fifty percent of respondents agree that marriage is a lifelong commitment, while the other 50 percent are uncertain or disagree.

Perhaps the uncertainty in these questions is an expression of the relatively limited experience individuals have had or can expect to have with marriage in their own lives, although the argument could conceivably be applied to explain pro-marriage as well as anti-marriage attitudes. Bisexuals in this sample, and indeed in the population, can more reasonably expect to marry, so I conducted an independent samples t-test to compare the scores of both groups on each of the two attitude measures concerning the durability and permanence in marriage and committed relationships. On the first measure, “In marriage you can count on your partner being there for you more than you can when you are living with someone outside of marriage,” the t-test revealed no significant difference in scores between bisexual respondents ( $M=2.58$ ,  $SD=1.297$ ) and homosexual respondents [ $M=2.83$ ,  $SD=1.403$ ,  $t(463)=1.947$ ,  $p=.052$ ]. Similarly, scores on the second item, “Couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme

circumstances,” were not significantly different between bisexuals ( $M=3.06$ ,  $SD=1.357$ ) and homosexuals [ $M=3.27$ ,  $SD=1.445$ ;  $t(415.7)=-1.595$ ,  $p=.111$ ]. While tests of mean difference do not always reach statistical significance, it is worth noting that the mean scores for homosexuals on these and other items measuring pro-marriage attitudes are consistently higher than the means of bisexual respondents.

Because sexual identity does not add much to understanding scores on these attitude measures, I ran a similar test to examine mean differences between those under 25 years of age—the youngest group, the group most likely to include students, and the group least likely to already be in a long-term committed relationship—and those 25 and over. My hypothesis was that these younger, inexperienced non-heterosexuals would hold stronger attitudes toward marital permanence and durability, that youthful optimism might trump an inherent cynicism born of age and experience in the queer romance market. This hypothesis was confirmed, but only on the item measuring agreement that marriage is a lifelong commitment. Mean scores for “under 25s” ( $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=1.426$ ) were significantly higher than the mean scores for older respondents [ $M=3.08$ ,  $SD=1.322$ ;  $t(464)=2.824$ ,  $p=.005$ ].

The magnitude of the effect is statistically small ( $\eta^2=.02$ ), but the importance of the finding should not be diminished. It raises the possibility that younger cohorts of non-heterosexuals are more likely to reasonably expect to marry than older lesbians and gays who have lived through not only private intimate same-sex relationships (failed or otherwise), but also the public social and political battles for equality that have reduced anti-gay prejudice and discrimination. Younger respondents not only believe marriage is permanent, but may also be more optimistic that it is within their reach. Cross-sectional survey data cannot be used to verify this claim, but the finding is an endorsement of future longitudinal studies of marriage attitudes among non-heterosexuals.

## Marriage and the Welfare of Children

Opposition to same-sex marriage is frequently based on the argument that procreation is a unique, specialized function of heterosexual marriage, one that entails a host of collective responsibilities and social obligations that homosexual couples—by virtue of being unable to reproduce offspring through sexual intercourse—cannot “naturally” fulfill (see Blankenhorn 2007). Thus, the argument goes, unions between lesbians or gay men cannot be recognized as “real” marriages. The problem with this argument, of course, is that a large number of children have grown up in households headed by same-sex couples—by some estimates, as many as six million children are being reared in lesbian and gay families (Badgett 1995, 1998).

### *Non-Heterosexual Parents in the Sample*

In the *Quest for Quotidian* sample, 100 individuals indicated that they are parents to at least one child, and sixty-six of those are parents to children under 18. Most of the minor children reported in the survey are the biological children of the respondent and live full-time with their gay, lesbian or bisexual parent. In all, the parents in this sample care and have cared for more than 200 children, with at least 39 respondents having already raised their children to adulthood. Twenty-six respondents are single parents, and of the remaining 74 parents in the sample, 39 are married to a different-sex spouse, 28 are living in a same-sex domestic partnership, six are in a different-sex domestic partnership, and one is in a same-sex marriage.

The relatively high concentration of parents in coupled households suggests that while marriage may be the preferred context for childrearing for people in heterosexual-styled unions, domestic partnership is perhaps the only two-parent context for nurturing children, or for becoming parents, available to individuals in same-sex relationships. In the absence of legal marriage, lesbian and gay parents appear to have sought out the next best thing for themselves and their children—committed, coresidential relationships. Participation in two-parent family structures possibly reflects modern economic conditions and considerations, a



negotiated strategy for reducing the strain of domestic labor and childcare, a tendency toward more conservative or assimilationist family values, or perhaps an amalgamation of such issues, no more for same-sex couples than for different-sex or legally married couples.

Many studies demonstrate that children do better when they have two parents in the home (see Glenn and Sylvester 2005, 2006), but research on whether parents *must* be different-sex to effectively care for children is in relatively short supply (Allen and Demo 1995; Lambert 2005), probably because ideological biases among researchers and advocates tends to undermine or discredit research findings that cast gay and lesbian parenting in a positive light (Stacey and Biblarz 2001). We know that children of married parents generally have better outcomes than children of single parents (Wallerstein et al. 2001; Waite and Gallagher 2000), but such conclusions are usually drawn from studies of family structural change that results from divorce. For heterosexuals, these outcomes are explained by the economic hardships associated with divorce, or economic disadvantages attached to single parenthood, mostly for women, that come about as immediate consequences of structural change (Glenn and Sylvester 2006). Comparing outcomes in lesbian and gay families to outcomes in divorced families or other alternative heterosexual family structures presumes same-sex-headed households bear disadvantages wrought by divorce, and thus does not encourage fair assessment of the efficacy of gay families or the success of children raised by same-sex parents. Most studies tend to demonstrate few differences in children's outcomes between same-sex-headed families and married heterosexual families (Hicks 2005; Stacey and Biblarz 2001).

It appears from the data here that parents in *Quest for Quotidian* are following the logic of the two-parent family model in their own households, which likely reflects a belief that marriage makes a difference for children regardless of whether they have a mom and a dad, or two moms, or two dads. Provided gay and lesbian couples with children can avoid economic disorganization or disadvantage, as well as most of the other difficulties that plague post-

divorce and single-parent families, there is little reason to believe that their inability to legally marry should prevent them from doing so for the sake of the children.

### *Children Benefit from Marriage*

To measure the extent to which participants in this research believe that marriage provides the best environment in which to raise children, I asked all respondents whether they agreed with the statement that “All things being equal, it is better for children to be raised in a household that has a married mother and father.” I chose this question because it has established validity and has been used in numerous surveys to measure the same concept, but it did not perform well in this research. Only 17 percent of the sample agreed with the statement at all, and the modal response was “strongly disagree.” The concept I was trying to capture was whether marriage is good for children, but after considering the wording of this particular item and the response patterns, I decided that for non-heterosexuals—and especially for gays and lesbians—the question is double-barreled and invalid for this sample. Non-heterosexual participants could conceivably respond to either (1) the idea that marriage is the best family structure in which to raise children, or, more likely, (2) the idea that only *heterosexual* marriage is good for children. It appears that most respondents interpreted the item as a measure of the importance of having heterosexual parents.

Because the relationship between marriage and children’s welfare is such an important and salient feature of current policy debates, I could not simply skip the question, especially if the final goal of this research is to capture and explain the strength of pro-marriage attitudes in this sample. In order to get at the concept I wanted to measure, I had to replace the original item with a form of the question adapted to the target population: “All things being equal, it would be better for children of gays and lesbians to be raised in a household where their same-sex parents are married, not just living together.” The distribution of responses to this item was essentially reversed from the first item. Only 15 percent disagreed and more than 52 percent of the sample agreed that children should grow up with same-sex parents who are married. On the first item, about 17 percent agreed while 60 percent

disagreed that it is better for children to have married heterosexual parents. On both items, between 22 and 23 percent of respondents selected the neutral category to signal their uncertainty. Independent samples t-tests showed no significant differences in mean scores on this item between men and women, bisexuals and homosexuals, or younger and older respondents, a finding that indicates a certain stability—but not uniformity—of ideology in the sample that cannot be explained by gender, sexual identity or age.

### *Decoupling Parenting from Marriage?*

For the currently unmarried, including those in civil unions, the desire to marry and the desire to have children (each measured as no=1, maybe=2, yes=3) are strongly and significantly correlated ( $r=.366$ ,  $p<.0005$ ;  $n=414$ ). Among these respondents, 60 percent specifically expressed a desire to marry at some point in their lives, compared to 26 percent who “maybe” would like to marry someday, and only 14 percent who do not want to marry or remarry at any point in their lives. The latter responses are distributed across all relationship status categories, from “single and unattached” to “in a civil union,” which implies that the individuals who do not want to marry are satisfied with their current relationships, marriage-like or not. Of those who want to get married at some point, three of four respondents at least consider the possibility of becoming a parent. Among currently unmarried same-sex couples ( $n=135$ ), almost 80 percent ( $n=105$ ) would like to marry their current partners or lovers, and almost two-thirds ( $n=66$ ) of these would-be married individuals want to have children or have more children.

For many in the sample, having children, or becoming parents, is closely linked to being married or in a committed relationship. Real life, however, sometimes makes parenting within a marriage or marriage-like relationship difficult or impossible. The survey item, “Couples who have children together ought to be married,” assesses the extent to which individuals in the sample believe that having children is an integral part of being married. This item is a standard item on other surveys about the strength of marriage, and is used here to specifically address the concern among marriage advocates that parenting is becoming

increasingly decoupled from marriage, that the roles of parent and spouse are becoming disintegrated from one another. The initial results are somewhat troubling.

Forty-nine percent of respondents disagreed that couples with children ought to be married, compared to 27 percent who agreed ( $M=2.6$ ,  $n=466$ ). These results are similar to the question regarding whether children should grow up in married households with a mother and a father. Likewise, t-tests on scores for the item revealed no significant differences in means due to gender, sexual identity or age difference in the sample. This would seem to indicate that marriage and parenting are, by and large, becoming less cohesive as institutionalized role sets for individuals. On one hand, non-heterosexuals are generally supportive of marriage as the preferred context for raising children, but on the other hand, about the same proportion do not see marriage as a necessary condition for effective parenting.

### The Centrality of Monogamy to Marriage:

#### Practice and Attitudes

Perhaps the structural feature that most strongly defines modern marriage is the norm of monogamy (Weaver and Woollard 2008, Kanazawa and Still 1999). Recent controversies in Arizona, Nevada, and Texas surrounding a polygamous religious sect (Tetreault 2008, Knickerbocker 2006) speak to the level of discomfort in American family culture with family systems that challenge the monogamy norm, and certainly most state constitutional amendments aimed at denying same-sex couples the right to marry implicitly place monogamy at the center of the legal definitions that limit marriage to one man and one woman. The political rhetoric surrounding movements to pass marriage amendments and the language of such legislation also implies that gays and lesbians are not what Seidman (2002) might call “good sexual citizens.” This prejudice feeds upon a common stereotype about non-heterosexuals and their same-sex partners: Gays and lesbians are undeserving of

marriage equality, because as a group they are unable to conform to the social expectations attached to contemporary marriage, namely the norm of monogamy.

Indeed, anti-gay rhetoric and activism seems designed to invoke a state of continuous sex panic that casts the intimate lives of non-heterosexuals as an affront to the very fibers that hold civilized society together, namely heterosexuality. Despite the increasing visibility of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in everyday society, in media representations, and in political circles, homosexuality continues to be reduced in much public discourse to a synonym for sexual deviance and promiscuity, and a dangerous promiscuity at that. Seidman notes that

Many scholars hold that the beliefs people have about being gay are not simply a reflection of what they know or don't know about homosexuality. Rather, the meaning of being gay is in part fixed by its being the opposite of what it means to be straight. For example, if heterosexuality is associated, ideally, with behaviors such as being loving and being monogamous, homosexuality is often associated in the public's mind with being hedonistic and promiscuous. (Seidman 2002:150)

Among the most virulent in the anti-gay crowd, assumptions of homosexual promiscuity are translated to claims that homosexuality is the result of child sexual abuse, that homosexuals themselves are likely to be predatory pedophiles, that they carry and intentionally pass along disease, and that they wish to "recruit" children and young people into their ranks in order to spread their anti-family values and behaviors to the larger society. With these assumptions entrenched in the public consciousness, it is easy to see how lesbians and gays are seen as something other than "good" citizens. Moreover, it is even easier for those opposed to marriage equality to dismiss the idea that non-heterosexuals might be, or even desire to be, monogamous in their own private relationships. As long as homosexuals are seen as being incapable of monogamy, the discriminatory proscriptions against same-sex marriage will appear on the surface to have moral, if not real, merit.

Frankly, not all homosexuals or bisexuals believe in or practice monogamy (Lannutti 2005), but this does not necessarily distinguish them from heterosexuals, who are certainly not consistently pillars of moral virtue when it comes to monogamous sexual relationships (Laumann, et al. 1994). Liberationist ideology in queer politics openly challenges the norm of monogamy, suggesting that the expectation that a person may have only one sexual partner for life infringes on the ability of an individual to form alternative sexual relationships if he or she so desires. The liberationist interpretation of monogamous marriage is that it is a heterosexist, patriarchal social structure which would introduce tighter social controls on non-heterosexuals and limit the creative and perhaps revolutionary ways that gays, lesbians and bisexuals have re-invented and enacted sexual and intimate relationships (Warner 1995). From the most extreme liberationist perspective, monogamy undermines individual freedom in a way both unwarranted and undesirable in the late modern world, and thus should not necessarily be embraced by the queer population, or anyone else, for that matter (Ettelbrick 1992).

### *Monogamy in Practice*

How compelling is the norm of monogamy among non-heterosexuals? I asked participants to select the relationship style they would most prefer, if they were single and unattached, and the relationship style that best describes their current relationship if they were coupled. The original categories for both questions are adapted from Shernoff's (1995) research on the relationship styles of gay men:

- Monogamously coupled and strictly sexually exclusive
- Non-monogamous, as long as we don't have to talk about it  
(unacknowledged open relationship)
- Primarily sexually exclusive; committed but "play" together as a couple  
(ménages)
- Primarily sexually exclusive; occasional non-monogamy (under certain conditions or with rules)

- Non-monogamous and not sexually exclusive (an acknowledge open relationship)
- A committed relationship, but no sex (non-sexual lovers)

While there were responses in all categories, “monogamously coupled and strictly sexually exclusive” was generally the rule rather than the exception. Among single respondents with no romantic attachments, 57 percent reported that they would prefer a monogamous relationship over other forms of intimate relationships. Fifty-two percent of participants in committed relationships described their unions, marriages and domestic partnerships as “strictly sexually exclusive,” as did 54 percent of those who were dating or seeing someone seriously. I merged the two measures—so that coupled respondents’ scores reflect their current relationship and single respondents’ scores reflect the kind of relationship they are seeking—to get an idea of the prevalence of monogamy in the sample overall. Using this variable, just over 48 percent of respondents appear to practice and prefer monogamy over various forms of non-monogamy. In other words, a substantial proportion of the sample rejects promiscuity as an option in committed relationships.

#### *Monogamy Among Lesbians and Gay Men*

Still, to justify continuing discrimination against gays and lesbians in family policy, opponents of same-sex marriage would likely point to the fact that the number of respondents already in or seeking monogamous relationships fails to reach even a simple majority. A review of the distribution of responses to the monogamy questions showed that 63 percent of homosexuals in the sample ( $n=279$ ) defined themselves and/or their relationships as monogamous, compared to only 26 percent of bisexuals ( $n=187$ ). Since the burden of discrimination is heavier for lesbians and gay men, it is worth asking whether being homosexual as opposed to bisexual increases the chances that individuals will identify themselves as monogamous or will pursue monogamous relationships. To do this, I conducted a standard direct logistic regression to determine if sexual identity—homosexual

Table 11. Logistic Regression of Gay/Lesbian Sexuality on Monogamous Relationship Style (n=228)

Variables	B	Wald Chi-Square	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval for Odds Ratio	
				<i>Lower</i>	<i>Upper</i>
Gay/Lesbian, not Bisexual	1.599	58.890**	4.948	3.289	7.444
Constant	-1.063	40.337	.345		

\*\*  $p < .0005$

or bisexual—would distinguish respondents who were strictly monogamous from those who were not.

Table 11 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis, including regression coefficients, Wald statistics, odds ratios, and 95% confidence intervals for odds ratios for the predictor variable, “Gay/Lesbian, not bisexual.” The test of the predictor variable against a constant-only model was statistically significant, Chi-Square 2(1, N=466)=64.85,  $p < .0005$ , which indicates the “Gay/Lesbian” variable identifies monogamous individuals more reliably than chance alone. The positive predictive power of the model is .6308, meaning that the model accurately classified 63% of those folks who claim to be in or desire strictly monogamous relationships.

More telling, however, is the odds ratio in Table 11. According to the analysis, gays and lesbians are almost five times more likely to be in the “monogamous” group than are bisexual men and women. From this finding, I can conclude that the relatively low rate of monogamy in the sample as a whole is most likely explained by the beliefs and practices of bisexual individuals—notably, individuals in this population who are often legally able and personally willing to exercise the right to marry as it currently exists in law, and who make up the majority of legally-married participants in this sample—rather than lesbians or gays who, for the most part, must try to adhere to the norm of monogamy without the benefit of social pressure and support for their relationships that come with marriage.



Sex and fidelity in same-sex relationships, as in all intimate relationships, are products of negotiation. “Sexual relationships outside the primary relationship are not de facto affairs,” write Martell and Prince (2005:1430), but “the context of the couple’s agreement with one another about outside sexual activity is crucial in understanding what impact such activity will have on the couple.” That 63 percent of homosexual individuals are monogamous to many might still seem a rather tepid endorsement of monogamy, and perhaps it is. But it is possible that it is the absence of marital opportunity, not a tendency toward promiscuity, that would explain at least some of the apparent weakness of normative monogamy among gays and lesbians.

Waite and Gallagher (2000), reviewing findings and analyzing data from the National Health and Social Life Survey by Laumann, Gagnon, Michael and Michaels (1992), conclude that “cohabiting relationships seem to be built around sex to an even greater extent than marriage” among heterosexuals, noting that “while sex is a very important part of marriage, it is not (as it is for cohabitators) the defining characteristic of the relationship” (Waite and Gallagher 2000:81-82). It is somewhat astounding that researchers might assume that since gays and lesbians in most jurisdictions cannot legally marry, they do not collectively feel the effects of its absence. Individuals in same-sex relationships often have cohabitation as their only option for making the kinds of commitments that lead to building a family. Heterosexual cohabitation is given a pass for emphasizing the sexual aspects of the intimate dyad, and heterosexuals themselves are not necessarily stigmatized as bad sexual citizens, at least not now in the 21st century. Same-sex couples, however, who by necessity rather than choice live in domestic partnerships or other relationships that approximate legal marriage are chastised and derided for their collective “deviance,” especially with regard to sexual monogamy. Because almost all gay and lesbian committed couples are living together as “cohabitators,” does it not make sense to consider the possibility that many of them, like heterosexual cohabitators, are also likely to see sex as a “defining characteristic” of their relationship? Add this possibility to the historical challenge to traditional modes of sexual

expression that is part of gay culture in the United States, and one might be able to explain why one-third of homosexuals in this study do not consider themselves monogamous. Perhaps if they could legally marry, the emphasis that Waite and Gallagher describe would shift from sex to the more tangible social benefits and obligations of marriage, and monogamy might be reported more frequently among the members of this population.

#### *Attitudes about Monogamy and Marriage*

Two items are included in the survey to measure attitudes about monogamy and the connection between valuing monogamy and valuing marriage. One captures attitudes toward monogamy in same-sex relationships, which generally are domestic partnerships, not marriage. It is a modified version of a more standard survey item that more specifically addresses monogamy in marriage. Both were included in the *Quest for Quotidian* questionnaire, coded so that agreement indicates positive attitudes toward monogamy in intimate relationships. By and large, the attitudes individuals hold about monogamy reflect the practices and preferences reported earlier, in much the same proportions. For this reason, I also compared the mean scores of homosexuals and bisexuals on each of these attitudinal measures using independent-samples t-tests.

Slightly over 47 percent of all respondents agreed that “it is wrong for gays and lesbians to have sex with others when they are in a committed relationship,” including 33.2 percent of bisexuals and 57 percent of homosexuals. The t-test revealed that the difference in mean scores between bisexuals ( $M=2.85$ ,  $SD=1.389$ ) and homosexuals ( $M=3.71$ ,  $SD=1.257$ ) on this item, attitudes toward monogamy in intimate relationships, was statistically significant,  $t(463)=-6.916$ ,  $p<.001$ , and that the magnitude of the effect was moderate to large ( $\eta^2=.094$ ).

On the second item, which addresses marital monogamy in particular, results are even more dramatic. While only 48.7 percent of the sample agreed with the statement that “it is wrong when married people have sex with someone other than their spouse”, just 29.4 percent of bisexuals agreed compared to a solid and substantial majority of lesbians and gays, 61.6 percent. The t-test on sample means showed a significant difference in scores on

attitudes toward marital monogamy between bisexual respondents ( $M=2.66$ ,  $SD=1.436$ ) and homosexual respondents [ $M=3.80$ ,  $SD=1.233$ ;  $t(354.53)=-8.848$ ,  $p<.001$ ]. The  $t$  statistic indicates that the effect size was considerably larger ( $\eta^2=.1446$ ) than on the more general question about monogamy in intimate relationships. This is the largest effect size recorded for any set of variables in  $t$ -tests in this research, and can be interpreted to mean that almost 15 percent of the variance in this score is explained by sexual identity alone. Overall, I can conclude that bisexual individuals in this sample are significantly less likely to agree with statements that suggest non-monogamy is wrong than are homosexuals, a finding that is consistent with the analyses of monogamous practices elaborated above.

Of all the individual attitude measures in this survey, the differences between bisexual and homosexual attitudes toward monogamy are the most striking. Of the 187 bisexuals in the sample, 40 percent are in different-sex committed relationships, and more than half among those are already in heterosexual marriages, but their attitudes toward marriage and toward monogamy in particular appear to be distinctly and dramatically different from the attitudes held by homosexuals and indeed by heterosexuals. Homosexuals seem to hold monogamous marriage in higher regard.

The two items analyzed here are strongly and positively correlated ( $r=.818$ ,  $N=465$ ,  $p<.001$ ), suggesting that individuals who hold positive attitudes toward monogamy hold such attitudes regardless of whether the relationship in question is a marriage or civil union, or a domestic partnership. Forty-two percent of all respondents agreed with both statements, but only 25 percent disagreed with both statements. There is a lot of uncertainty and ambivalence in this sample, probably because many in this subculture and population are still hammering out the meaning of monogamy in the absence of social, structural and legal support for same-sex relationships. Among gays and lesbians, more than 50 percent agreed, but only 11 percent disagreed with both statements about monogamy in relationships. These numbers clearly give the lie to the notion that homosexuals and the culture they enact celebrates promiscuity. Based on the analyses in this section, lesbians and gay men are

more often than not monogamous, and indeed monogamy appears to be a *lifestyle* for most homosexuals. They are monogamous because they want to be, because they believe—as does the majority of heterosexuals, but only a minority of bisexuals—that monogamy is a central feature of intimate life (Worth, Reid and McMillan 2002), and more importantly, of married life.

### Taking Marriage Seriously

An unfortunate joke has floated around the queer community for decades (see Gordon 2006 for discussion of these stereotypes): “What does a lesbian bring to the second date?”

The answer?

“A U-Haul.”

The joke exploits the idea that gays and lesbians are desperate for a relationship, but also suggests that lesbian and gay relationships are somehow unserious, driven by petty concerns, rash decision-making, or even immaturity. While the joke might be funny to some, this view of non-heterosexual relationships is stereotypical, prejudicial, and distinctly unfunny when deployed in arguments about marriage rights for same-sex couples. Marriage advocates who oppose same-sex marriage point to the relatively low rates of same-sex marriage in Canada and Massachusetts (Gallagher and Baker 2006) as indications that the LGBT community is not really interested in marriage, tacitly implying that gays and lesbians do not have the will or character necessary to build relationships deserving of the moniker. The problem is that there is little empirical evidence to either support or challenge that claim.

Two items in the current survey assess whether non-heterosexuals view marriage as a weighty and considered decision, and both are concerned with marriage timing. The first item, “Too many couples rush into marriage,” is drawn from previous research. Legal marriage presumes coresidence with a heterosexual spouse; marriage means “moving in.” For same-sex romantic partners, however, the absence of marriage and its rituals reverses the logic of household-building. To most gays and lesbians, moving in means “marriage.” I included

in the survey a second item, worded for those in the non-heterosexual population for whom marriage is out of reach: “Too many lesbian and gay couples move in with each other too soon after they meet.” Both items measure the degree of seriousness with which respondents take coresidential intimate relationships, be they marriage or cohabitation.

Respondents are far more critical, apparently, of heterosexuals than of gay people on this issue. Most respondents (more than 85 percent) agreed that too many couples rush into marriage, and since most of the people who marry are heterosexual, it is logical to assume that non-heterosexuals believe that straight people do not take marriage seriously enough. On the other hand, responses to the question concerning gay and lesbian relationships were more normally distributed, but only 43.4 percent of respondents agreed that same-sex couples move in together too soon after they meet. About 21 percent disagreed, and 35.8 percent took a neutral or uncertain stance on the item. Looking at the data another way, 57 percent of participants strongly agreed that couples marry too soon, but only 11 percent strongly agreed that gay and lesbian couples are too quick to merge households. The rather strong criticism of marriage timing, as opposed to “cohabitation timing” among gays and lesbians, holds across the various groups in the sample. There are no statistically significant differences in mean scores on the first item between men and women, bisexuals and homosexuals, respondents under 30 and older respondents, or those who are coupled and those who are single. Almost everyone in the sample believes that too many people do not take marriage seriously enough, and get married too quickly or too early in their relationships.

Means tests on the second item concerning whether gays or lesbians rush into cohabitational relationships reveal a slightly different story. Sexual identity and age appear to influence attitudes toward marriage timing. T-tests comparing the mean score for bisexuals ( $M=3.10$ ,  $SD=.893$ ) to the mean score for homosexuals ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SD=1.057$ ) showed a significant difference between the two groups, using the Levene statistic,  $t(439.94)=3.789$ ,  $p<.001$ . A similarly significant difference was revealed when comparing mean scores for respondents between the ages of 18 and 29 ( $M=3.42$ ,  $SD=1.009$ ) and respondents

30 and older,  $t(464)=3.119$ ,  $p=.002$ . The magnitude of each effect was small ( $\eta^2=.03$  for homosexuals/bisexuals;  $\eta^2=.02$  for younger/older respondents), but it remains that homosexuals and younger respondents, on average, tend to take a dimmer view of the idea of moving in with a lover too soon after they meet than do bisexuals and older respondents.

The difference in the pattern of responses to both items begs interpretation. Clearly, participants in this sample distinguish between marriage and cohabitation. Cohabitation is probably seen as a less serious commitment, even when it is the only marriage-like option available. Marriage, on the other hand, is taken very seriously by a dramatic majority of individuals in the sample. The differences in the distributions between the two items suggest that cohabitation is a more ambiguous relationship, that the decision to move in together might be based on any number of factors that are not immediately clear, and that living together might be an elegant social analogy for marriage, but it is not marriage. Marriage, according to these data, should not be entered into lightly. The decision to marry, especially from the perspective of homosexuals and younger people in this sample, is serious, and should take some time.

### Divorce as a Social Problem

Until the emergence of same-sex marriage in the late 1990s, no social change had more of an effect on marriage culture than the introduction of no-fault divorce in the early 1970s. Relatively high rates of divorce remain associated in the public consciousness with a range of family-related social problems, including fatherlessness and single-parent families, which many blame for increased teen sexual activity, rising rates of pregnancy, high school dropout rates, juvenile delinquency, increasing poverty among women and children, and the rising costs of welfare programs to address these problems. In short, most marriage advocates (who frequently oppose same-sex marriage) see the ease and prevalence of divorce as significant indicators of the decline of family and marriage in US society over the last 40 years (Stacey 1996, 2004).

Most respondents in the sample do see divorce as a problem, and as is true for most of the attitude questions on this survey, gays and lesbians appear to take the stronger “pro-marriage” position than bisexuals. The measure I used was straightforward. I asked whether individuals agreed or disagreed that “divorce is a serious national problem in the United States today,” with responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “neither agree nor disagree” to “strongly agree.” While 57.9 percent of the sample agreed, only 22.1 percent disagreed. The remaining 20 percent, or one in five respondents, were uncertain.

Again, I ran tests comparing means to determine whether gender identity, sexual identity, age, or relationship status influenced responses. Sexual identity was the only factor among the four that yielded significant results on independent samples t-tests. The pattern is by now familiar: There was a significant difference in mean scores between bisexual respondents ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=1.325$ ) and homosexual respondents [ $M=3.69$ ,  $SD=1.119$ ;  $t(371.23)=-2.809$ ,  $p=.005$ ], and the magnitude of the difference in the means was small ( $\eta^2=.0167$ ).

This measure and these tests do not necessarily confirm that non-heterosexuals view divorce as a primary cause of juvenile delinquency, or any other specific social problem, but neither does it necessarily suggest that bisexual, lesbian and gay people are “anti-divorce.” The high level of concern about divorce prevalent in a group that has limited or no access to marriage does reinforce, however, that this population places a high value on marriage. Individuals and groups tend to take marriage very seriously, and our social history is replete with evidence supporting the central importance of marriage to family life, community cohesion and economic and social growth. The data here have shown that this belief is not foreign to gay, lesbian and bisexual people. Consider that only 13.5 percent of respondents in this survey agreed with the statement, “These days, couples who live together outside marriage get all the benefits of marriage without the legal details.” In fact, 53 percent strongly disagreed with the statement, meaning that marriage is viewed by many, but by no means all, non-heterosexuals as structurally superior to other forms of intimate relationships. That so many respondents register concern about divorce—that is, the negation of marriage—as

a social problem most likely indicates a commitment to the core values and practices that define the institution of marriage in the United States, as well as an understanding of the rights of individuals and responsibilities to the community that set marriage apart from other relational forms in the family system. Divorce, I might argue, is interpreted by participants in this study as a problem because it represents the failure of married people to uphold their end of the social bargain, to take marriage seriously.

### How Strong is Marriage?

Marriage is arguably the one social institution uniquely tailored to empower people to create families. Marriage creates kin from non-kin, binds extended families and support networks to one another through married couples, creates boundaries through monogamy and a private context for emotional and physical intimacy free from surveillance or interference from the larger society, organizes everyday economic and domestic labor, integrates individuals into social networks and communities, and often provides a relatively stable environment in which to have and care for children. The eufunctions of marriage are well-documented, as are its historically significant dysfunctions. This study does not seek to settle the debate over whether marriage is good or bad, workable or unworkable, or liberating or enslaving. Marriage exists as a social practice, a form of relationship that connotes a preferred social status for its participants, and thus translates into a range of privileges, benefits and rights that most people engage and enjoy without a second thought. For lesbians and gay men in particular, marriage has remained culturally and legally out of reach until relatively recently, despite the creative and subversive ways they have devised to live “normal lives” even as they have been persistently marginalized by deeply-rooted homophobia, stigmatization as criminals or deviants, and institutionalized discrimination that has, at least throughout modernity, kept them from being able to fully realize themselves as individuals and citizens.



Despite being isolated from marriage, or perhaps being forced to see their lives through a “prism of marriagelessness” (Rauch 2004:9), non-heterosexuals in this sample and in the population grew up in families whose existence was informed and organized by marriage (Sherrill 1996). Marriage was not something they rejected, out of hand, but something that rejected them. With this in mind, it is easier to understand why many non-heterosexuals in this sample hold attitudes toward marriage that are not so very different from the attitudes held by their heterosexual friends, siblings or parents. The movement for marriage equality, seen in this same light, seems a call for the right to be mundane, to fall into the same comforting routines of social life that organize and enhance the lives heterosexuals. While activists with liberationist leanings might find fault with the movement, it is difficult to ignore the underpinnings of the assimilationist logic that drives so many toward an integrative rather than revolutionary family politics.

One of the purposes of this study is to attempt to explain why the marriage movement is as strong as it is, and to identify the social forces that are leading same-sex-attracted people to call for the right to marry. My general hypothesis is rather simple: they believe in marriage. But how strong is that belief? There has been little research testing the “conservative case” for marriage, and thus comparisons between the strength of pro-marriage ideology between non-heterosexuals and heterosexuals or the general population are rarer still.

#### *Elements of the Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale*

In order to measure the strength of pro-marriage ideology among bisexuals, lesbians and gay men, I constructed a scale from eight of the individual attitude measures discussed above. All the indicators have been validated in other surveys on the strength of marriage in the United States except one worded to capture the concept for the non-heterosexual population, which replaced a similar question. Collectively, the attitude measures capture the various dimensions of traditional attitudes toward marriage in the sample of non-heterosexuals. The Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale (PMAS) is the sum of each respondent’s scores on the following individual items:

- Marriage is an old-fashioned, outmoded institution.
- All things being equal, it would be better for children of gays and lesbians to be raised in a household where their same-sex parents are married, not just living together.
- Couples who have children together ought to be married.
- Couples who marry should make a lifelong commitment to one another, to be broken only under extreme circumstances.
- In the absence of violence and extreme conflict, parents who have an unsatisfactory marriage should stay together until their children are grown.
- It is wrong when married people have sex with someone other than their spouse.
- Too many couples rush into marriage.
- Divorce is a serious national problem in the United States today.

#### *Performance and Reliability*

Scores on the PMAS are normally distributed from 8 to 40, with a sample mean of 26.25 (median=26, mode=25). There are no missing data. Reliability analysis on the 8-item scale yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of .64. Higher scores on the scale indicate a stronger expression of attitudes favorable to marriage and to assimilationist ideology. Scores below 32 likely indicate an ambivalent or more liberationist ideology. The scale reflects the emphasis on children salient in the critique of family from the more conservative side of the political spectrum.

#### *Effects of Sexual Identity on the Pro-Marriage*

##### *Attitudes Scale (PMAS)*

Sexual identity—whether someone is bisexual or homosexual, as defined in this research—has been the identity marker that most frequently accounts for differences in the strength of individual pro-marriage attitudes. The evidence so far is leading to a

testable hypothesis, namely, that homosexual people hold stronger pro-marriage attitudes than bisexual people, who are more likely to be able to access the social and legal benefits of marriage. Put another way, an assimilationist ideology is likely to be stronger among homosexuals than among bisexuals in the sample. To test this hypothesis, I ran a series of statistical tests comparing means, using the PMAS as the dependent variable.

The first tests included an independent-samples t-test by which I compared mean scores on the PMAS for bisexuals and homosexuals, generally. The mean score on the PMAS for bisexuals ( $M=25.06$ ,  $SD=5.16$ ) was lower than the mean score for lesbian and gay respondents ( $M=27.05$ ,  $SD=5.15$ ), and the difference was statistically significant,  $t(464)=-4.090$ ,  $p<.001$ . As with individual attitude measures, the effect size was statistically small ( $\eta^2=.03$ ). Nevertheless, my hypothesis was confirmed: assimilationist ideology is stronger among homosexuals than among bisexuals. However, I remained concerned about the effect size, so I ran similar tests on the other identity markers I have used in analyses—gender, age and relationship status—to examine how they might influence or impact the PMAS. Results of the t-test of the mean scores between men ( $M=26.96$ ,  $SD=4.90$ ) and women ( $M=25.54$ ,  $SD=5.48$ ) were significant, using the Levene statistic,  $t(458.38)=2.951$ ,  $p=.003$ . Women are slightly less inclined to assimilationist ideology, and have weaker pro-marriage attitudes than men. Mean scores on the PMAS are not significantly influenced either by age or relationship status.

Having established that sexual identity and gender each influence the strength of marriage among non-heterosexuals, I ran a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to examine the strength of marriage or pro-family assimilationist ideology between gender-identified sexuality groups in the sample: bisexual men, bisexual women, gay men, and lesbian women. I wanted to know which of the groups had the weakest and the strongest scores on the PMAS, and whether the differences in those scores were significant. There was a statistically significant difference at the  $p<.05$  level in PMAS scores for the four groups,  $F(3, 462)=6.265$ ,  $p<.001$ . Despite reaching statistical significance, the differences in mean

scores between the groups were moderate to small, and the effect size,  $\eta^2$ , was .04. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for bisexual women ( $M=24.8$ ,  $SD=5.10$ ) was significantly different from that of gay men ( $M=27.2$ ,  $SD=4.78$ ) and lesbian women ( $M=26.7$ ,  $SD=5.87$ ). Scores for bisexual men ( $M=25.9$ ,  $SD=5.32$ ) did not differ significantly from any of the other groups, but that might be explained by small number of bisexual men in the sample ( $n=43$ ).

The ANOVA results suggest that bisexual women are the group most likely to resist assimilationist ideology, and to hold a more “anti-marriage” orientation than any other group in the sample. Bisexual women outnumber bisexual men more than three to one, and represent 31 percent of the sample compared to lesbians’ 19 percent. Only gay men constitute a larger group at 41 percent of the sample ( $n=190$ ). Lesbians and gay men do not differ significantly on PMAS mean scores.

#### Non-Heterosexuals and the “Normal” Life

What these tests show is that there is nothing intrinsically or uniquely “anti-marriage” or “anti-family” about homosexuals—people who would prefer to be in same-sex relationships. The vast majority of non-heterosexual people in the United States denied marriage rights are gay or lesbian, and the reasons policy-makers and anti-gay activists give for denying that right to homosexuals rely heavily on assumptions that lesbians and gay men hold negative attitudes toward marriage and traditional notions of family. My analyses here demonstrate that we cannot assume non-heterosexuals share a collective culture or political orientation toward marriage and family any more than they share a sexual identity. What is more, my findings lend convincing support to the notion that being gay by itself does not reliably predict rejection of what are understood to be basic and largely traditional family values, or even traditional notions of what marriage means. Rather, my findings so far suggest that for many non-heterosexuals—particularly the people who wish to marry their same-sex partners—the “alternative lifestyle” that arouses so much ire among opponents to same-sex marriage

is a way of living deeply informed by the same values and attitudes that define marriage and family-making for the majority of privileged heterosexuals. Nevertheless, liberationist attitudes are more pronounced among bisexuals and women, and assimilationist attitudes are more prevalent among homosexuals and men. Overall, it appears that gays and lesbians, more than bisexuals, are moving toward marriage, catching up to the quotidian.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### MAPPING THE QUOTIDIAN

#### The Strength of Marriage and Assimilationist Ideology

We can glean from comparisons of means that homosexuals and bisexuals hold significantly different positions on a number of attitudes, and particular on attitudes about monogamy in marriage. Analyses of my Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS) suggest that the former group is demonstrably less enthusiastic about traditional marriage values than the latter. Overall, bisexuals in this study are probably more likely to embrace the liberationist ideology most often associated with radical and feminist critiques of traditional marriage and modern family models, while homosexuals in the sample tend toward assimilation as a cultural policy. However, the same analyses demonstrated that identity markers such as sexual identity or gender by themselves are not powerful enough to explain the stronger demand for marriage equality among some non-heterosexuals and not others, or the frequent spikes in popularity of same-sex marriage within the queer population and among the public at large.

#### Dependent Variable: Pro-Marriage

#### Attitude Scale (PMAS)

The Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale (PMAS) developed in Chapter 6 was designed to measure the relative strength or weakness of attitudes toward marriage, which can be interpreted as assimilationist or, respectively, liberationist ideological tendencies in the sample. Because the PMAS draws on generally-accepted items from national surveys in use around the country, the scale gives us a relatively accurate starting point for analyzing how and why non-heterosexuals value the institution of marriage, something that has not often

been measured in this population. Certainly political support for policy changes leading to same-sex marriage has been measured (Avery, et al. 2007, Barclay and Fisher 2003, Brewer and Wilcox 2005, Brumbaugh, et al. 2008, Egan and Sherrill 2005, Loftus 2001), among both heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals, but is supporting same-sex marriage the same as holding more or less traditional attitudes toward the institution? In order to distinguish between assimilationists and liberationists generally, and those with stronger rather than weaker pro-marriage attitudes specifically, I use the PMAS as the basis for testing hypotheses about different groups within the sample, and as the dependent variable in a regression analysis in which I attempt to build a model for understanding the factors that shape ideological orientation toward marriage.

### *Influences of Identity*

Although I have already established that some identity markers effectively explain differences in specific attitudes toward marriage as well as variation in mean scores on the PMAS, I begin this phase of data analysis with a standard multiple regression of a set of identity markers on the dependent variable, the PMAS. So far, I have for the most part used gender and sexual identity as separate variables. In the standard and sequential regression models presented here, I have chosen to use the more specific gendered sexual identity variable. The categorical variable identifying bisexual men, bisexual women, gay men and lesbians was transformed into four binary variables, or dummy variables, used as predictors in the first model, and essentially as control variables in subsequent models. For example, bisexual man is coded 1 if respondent reports sexual identity as “bisexual” and gender identity as “man,” while all other responses are coded 0. The predictors used in the model are bisexual man, bisexual woman, lesbian woman, while gay man is omitted to serve as the reference category for the three included variables. Most anti-gay rhetoric is directed toward homosexual men, and the most virulent anti-gay stereotypes (e.g., pedophile, pervert, predator) usually attach to gay men, whose rejection of heterosexuality, gay identities and sexual practices appears to be considered the “worst of the worst” by social and religious

conservatives and others who express distaste or disgust at the idea of gay equality. For this reason, I used gay men as the reference category, and compare other gendered sexual identities to gay men in most analyses.

The two other identity markers used in analyses are age and relationship status. The age variable used here is a binary variable that codes raw age under 30 years as “1,” and raw age of 30 or more years as “0.” Respondents under thirty were born after 1974, and have always lived in a world in which gender inequality is openly challenged and often addressed, and in which divorce has always been an integral and unquestioned element in the family system and family decision-making. By dividing the sample into those under 30 and those 30 and older, I control for not only age, but also for the effect of growing into adulthood in the era of no-fault divorce and increased equality for women. Relationship status is similarly coded “1” when respondent reports being in a committed relationship (not just dating), and “0” when the respondent reports no current romantic partner, no “steady” dating partner, or is single and not seeking a long-term relationship.

#### *Regression Model 1: Analysis and Results*

A standard multiple regression of these identity markers on the Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale was conducted to determine how much gendered sexual identity, age and relationship status (coupled or not) together influence positive attitudes toward marriage. Table 12 displays correlations between the five identity markers and the PMAS, and among the identity markers themselves. All the predictors in this model are binary variables, and there are no missing data, although one case is omitted as an outlier (n=466).

This regression tests a series of related hypotheses derived from conservative arguments against same-sex marriage, based on stereotypical propositions that homosexual people or people in same-sex relationships are unfit for marriage and family life, are collectively antipathetic toward what are called “traditional family values,” and do not behave in ways that reflect mainstream values. Specific hypotheses tested in Model 1 include the following:



Table 12. Correlation Matrix for Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale and Predictors used in Regression Model 1, including Age, Coupled Status and Gendered Sexual Identity , N=465

	Pearson's R Correlation Statistic		
	Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS)	Coupled Status	Age (under 30)
Independent Predictors			
Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS)	1.000	.040	.014
Age (under 30)	.014	-.277**	1.000
Gendered Sexual Identity			
Gay Men	.148*	-.050	-.206**
Bisexual Men	-.021	.045	-.057
Bisexual Women	-.188**	.016	.219**
Lesbian Women	.052	.011	.042

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

*H<sub>1</sub> Homosexuals are more likely than bisexuals to hold weaker positive attitudes toward traditional marriage;*

*H<sub>2</sub> Older Respondents are more likely than younger respondents to hold stronger positive attitudes toward marriage; and*

*H<sub>3</sub> Respondents in committed relationships are more likely than single respondents to hold stronger positive attitudes toward marriage.*

Table 13 displays unstandardized regression coefficients (B), the standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), the intercept,  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  for the first step of sequential regression on the Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale. According to the analysis,  $H_2$  and  $H_3$  can be rejected, as neither age nor coupled relationship status is a significant predictor of PMAS scores. The analysis shows that bisexuality is inversely related to PMAS scores for both men and women, but that lesbian and gay identities are both positively associated with PMAS scores. The finding that bisexual women are the only group significantly more likely to report lower scores on the PMAS ( $\beta = -.237, p < .001$ ) than gay men lends support to earlier analyses that revealed significant differences in means on specific attitude scores between homosexuals and

Table 13. Model 1—Regression of Identity Markers on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS)

Identity Markers	Model 1				
	Mean	SD	B	SE B	$\beta$
Bisexual Men	--	--	-1.368	.869	-.076
Bisexual Women	--	--	-2.676	.588	-.237**
Lesbian Women	--	--	-.541	.669	-.041
Age under 30	--	--	.888	.527	.083
Coupled	--	--	.736	.499	.070
Intercept			26.619	.480	
Model Correlation Coefficients					R <sup>2</sup> =.048
					Adjusted R <sup>2</sup> =.038
					R=.219

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

bisexuals. That women's scores on the PMAS are significantly influenced by bisexuality while men's scores are not, however, suggests that interaction between gender and sexual identity results in different sets of attitudes toward marriage among women.

Overall, Model 1 was significant,  $F_1(5,459)=4.623, p<.001$ . The  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  indicate that age, gendered sexual identity, and relationship status together explain four to five percent of the variation on pro-marriage attitude scores. In other words, results from this regression once more suggest that identity alone does not reliably account for ideological commitments to either assimilationist or liberationist perspectives on marriage and family. These results indicate that neither age, relationship status, nor gendered sexual identity—with the possible exception of bisexual women, who might be inclined to hold less positive views toward marriage than other groups in the sample—has much at all to do with the values and attitudes members of the non-heterosexual population hold toward marriage. Based on these results, it is at least highly suspect to equate “gay” with “anti-family.” Findings suggesting significant interaction between gender and sexuality highlight the need for nuanced interpretation of the influence of identity markers on attitudes, at least one less clumsy than

the “either you are with us or against us” conclusions drawn by anti-gay activists and others in the family debates who are opposed to same-sex marriage.

### Lifestyles and Attitudes Toward Marriage:

#### Community, Religiosity and Monogamy

Sequential regression was employed to determine if the addition of variables describing public engagement and private lifestyles would improve prediction of PMAS scores, and expand understanding of the factors that might influence adherence to traditional values and definitions of marriage. The initial block of dichotomous identity markers function as front-loaded control variables to account for gender and sexuality, age, and relationship status in Models 2, 3 and 4. The identity markers indicate who non-heterosexuals are, and why they are being studied in the first place. In subsequent regression, the identity marker variables control for gender, sexuality, age and relationship status, in keeping with my general commitment to conduct this research under the assumption that non-heterosexuals exist, *prima facie*. By front-loading these variables in the sequential regression and resulting models, I hope to reduce the likelihood of overstating the significance of any specific findings at any stage of analysis, as well as challenge the conventional practice of adding such control variables nearer the end of analyses.

#### Community Integration: Failure and Revelation

The initial working hypothesis governing this model states that stronger pro-marriage attitudes representing assimilationist orientation toward marriage are positively associated with integration in social networks and communities. Specifically, I hypothesized that

*H<sub>4</sub> The higher the level of involvement in the local community (measured using the Civic Involvement Index), the stronger are attitudes favorable to marriage (the Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale, or PMAS); and*

H<sub>5</sub> *The deeper the integration into the queer community (measured using the Queer Community Involvement Scale, QCIS), the weaker are attitudes favorable to marriage (measured using the PMAS).*

Prior to regression analysis, I conducted a bivariate correlation to ensure that the constructed variables Civic Involvement Index, Queer Community Integration Scale (QCIS) and Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale (PMAS) would meet a basic assumption of multivariate analysis, namely that independent variables included in regression should be correlated with the dependent variable, but not correlated with each other or with other independent predictors. The results of the initial bivariate correlation were surprising. The correlation between the Civic Involvement Index and the PMAS ( $r=.082, p=.077$ ) and the correlation between QCIS and PMAS ( $r=.650, p=.021$ ) failed to reach significance, although the CII and QCIS were significantly correlated with one another ( $r=.239, p<.001$ ). Because neither measure of community integration was significantly correlated with marriage attitudes, these variables were discarded as potential predictors.

Similar results were obtained when analyzing correlation between the PMAS and other variables measuring various dimensions of social integration. For example, the variable disclosure measures visibility, or the extent to which people are open to others about their sexuality within their social networks. Disclosure is a valid measure of at least one aspect of community integration of non-heterosexuals, but was not significantly correlated with marriage attitudes at all ( $r=.023, p=.613$ ). The positive correlation between the PMAS and a more traditional proxy for community integration, “years in community,” was very weak and still only approached the threshold of significance ( $r=.082, p=.079$ ). Exploration of my data brought me to one variable that measured the concepts in the hypotheses and was significantly but still only weakly correlated with marriage: “years in current home” (*yrshome*;  $r=.117, p<.05$ ), and “proportion of friendship network that is homosexual” (*networkq*;  $r=-.127, p<.01$ ). Unfortunately, if the validity of a measure is largely dependent

upon the use to which the measure is put, then the validity of both of these variables within the context of my hypotheses is suspect.

Using years in one's current home as a measure of community integration assumes (1) that residential stability is a proxy for community integration, and (2) that the more time one spends in a place, the more integrated s/he becomes into the community that surrounds that place. For the sociologist studying gay and lesbian populations, these assumptions are counterintuitive. First, about 65 percent of *Quest for Quotidian* respondents reported that they had been in their current homes or apartments 3 or fewer years. Some might have moved recently within their communities, or moved in with a significant other whom they met in their shared community; others might have moved from one city or neighborhood to another for work, for love, or just for a change of scenery; and still others might have lived 20 years in their current home and still not be integrated into either the straight or gay community in any meaningful way, especially if they closeted or feel threatened by their neighbors or community leaders. Second, time spent does not equal integration. If it did, lesbians and gays would be unlikely to report so often experiencing alienation in their hometowns or in the neighborhoods in which they grew up, and non-heterosexuals in rural areas would not generally tend to migrate toward cities and urban ghettos, where the relative freedom to express alternative sexual identities without negative sanction or stigma seems to make integration and the development of a sense of belonging even possible.

The *networkq* variable presents a different set of problems related to validity. As discussed earlier, this variable is derived from the self-reported number of friends who are homosexual divided by the total number of friends, heterosexual and homosexual, with scores ranging from zero to one. The first problem should be immediately evident: a proportion does not tell us much about the actual size, reach or influence of one's friendship network. A lesbian individual reports she has three friends, two heterosexual and one homosexual. Does the fact that the majority of her friendships are with heterosexual people mean that this woman is more integrated into the heterosexual community? I would argue it does not, but even

so, she has only three friends: From that fact alone, it would appear that she might be somewhat uninvolved with her community. Someone who describes her friendship network as containing 30 friends—ten homosexual and twenty heterosexual—would appear on the face to be more integrated into the community one way or another, but on the variable *networkq*, the women in these examples would have the same score. The second problem is the implication that the higher the score *networkq*, the more integrated into the queer community one is, and the less integrated into the heterosexual community one is. Consider that this variable is normally distributed in this sample. When *networkq* is expressed as a discrete categorical variable (up to 10 percent, over 10 percent up to 20 percent, etc.), the mean, median and mode fall in the fifth category (up to 50 percent), meaning that about one-third of all respondents report that between 40 and 60 percent of their friends are homosexual. The raw *networkq* data make this even clearer: the raw mean for *networkq* expressed as a continuous variable is .48, while the median and mode are both .50. The question is this: How do we interpret the scores in the middle of the distribution? It would appear that a balanced number of heterosexual and homosexual friends would indicate a relatively high degree of integration overall, but the logic of the measure actually suggests that respondents are no more integrated into the queer community than they are into the heterosexual community. *Networkq* was recoded so that scores around the mean would indicate higher integration, while scores toward the two tails of the distribution would indicate less “balanced” integration, but that measure fails for the same reasons. What *networkq* probably describes is the degree to which membership in the “non-heterosexual club” affects *perceptions* of integration, but it does not measure integration itself. Because the correlation between *networkq* and the PMAS should not be ignored, and because friendship networks probably do exert some influence on attitudes that should be accounted for, I constructed a dichotomous form of *networkq* to indicate a “predominantly homosexual friendship network” for use as a control variable in sequential regression.

Further analyses would eventually show that both “proportion of friendship network that is homosexual” and “years in home” are significantly correlated with a number of other independent variables in the regression equation, and so were ultimately tossed into the growing pool of discarded community integration variables. The failure of any valid measure of community integration in this survey to meet the basic assumption of multivariate analysis—correlation with the dependent variable—led me to reject both of the working hypotheses in favor of the null: Neither civic involvement nor integration into the queer community has a significant effect on attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals.

The rejection of these hypotheses is itself an important finding about non-heterosexuals and their attitudes toward marriage. Community integration and participation in public life do not significantly influence attitudes toward marriage, so I must assume that the most powerful influences on non-heterosexuals’ attitudes lie in personal, more private practices, perceptions and circumstances. Apparently, non-heterosexuals view the institution of marriage through the lens of individualism, think of their own marriage or possible marriage as a private arrangement informed by their personal expression of beliefs about what matrimony ought to mean. This view of marriage is not uncommon among heterosexuals, but among heterosexuals it has been cause for alarm as scholars and pundits cite individualism as corrosive to marriage. For lesbians, gays and bisexuals, however, the push for marriage appears to be driven by this commitment to marriage as a personal, not public, choice; a private contract; and an individual human right.

Because non-heterosexuals appear to be following the example of their “marriageable” heterosexual counterparts, it is likely that their attitudes toward marriage, including attitudes that represent an assimilationist orientation, will be influenced by many of the same personal factors that shape the attitudes of heterosexual people. To test this theory, I screened two variables: one that measures personal religiosity, and another that measures personal and practical commitment to monogamy. Both met the assumptions of the model, and were included in the sequential regression.

### *Strength of Personal Religious Belief*

One of the most politically compelling—but obviously flawed—arguments in the public debate over same-sex marriage is a religious one, the most egregious expression of which is the proclamation by the infamous Phelps family of the Westboro Baptist Church that “God hates fags.” Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions expressly define marriage as between a man and a woman, and proscribe marital unions between people of the same sex. Subscribers to this point of view hold that marriage simply is not possible for gay and lesbian couples, that marriage is essentially a religious institution deriving its legitimacy from the church or other faith community, and thus is not subject to definition by individuals, much less regulation by the state. From this somewhat extreme perspective, legal recognition of same-sex relationships as marriages is at best an encroachment upon religious freedom. At worst, marriages between gays or between lesbians are tantamount to blasphemy that invites the wrath of a vengeful Almighty on a sinful and disobedient America.

The weaker version of this objection amounts to a tepid endorsement of alternatives to marriage—civil unions, for example—that are not called “marriage,” in order to leave intact the “sanctity” of marriage as a religious sacrament. Stronger versions of the religious objection to same-sex marriage rely on interpretations of the Bible and other sacred texts to justify continued discrimination against non-heterosexuals and same-sex couples as a “natural” and appropriate consequence of their “sin.” Those supporting the latter position fear that allowing same-sex couples to marry will signal the end of claims that heterosexuality is “morally” superior to homosexuality, thus undermining the foundations of institutionalized discrimination against lesbians and gays which many churches defend. Despite the foggy logic that informs these arguments, it remains probable that within queer culture—as in American culture—there exists a robust relationship between religion or religiosity and marriage attitudes (Yip 2004).

Because adherents to the “homosexual agenda” rhetoric promote the idea that same-sex attraction is “sickness” or a deviant lifestyle choice, there is also an assumption among these



opponents that a “cure” is possible. At the very least, same-sex attracted individuals can learn to make—and live with—less “sinful” and specifically heterosexual choices. Of course, the “cure” for homosexuality is deemed by many to be a resocialization regimen that includes more God and less gay. In this study, I do not assume that non-heterosexuality—bisexuality or homosexuality—is aberrant or abnormal, or that same-sex couples are living in “sin.” What I do suspect is that at least part of the claim of religious activists might be correct—that religion matters, and influences attitudinal orientations among non-heterosexuals who are or have been religious—so I test the following hypothesis in the second step of sequential regression, controlling for identity markers:

H<sub>6</sub> *The more religious one is, the more positive is one's view of marriage.*

Many gays and lesbians have been rejected or even ejected by the faith communities in which they grew up. Often, when they attempt to continue to practice their faith openly and honestly as gay people, they find they are unwelcome in the congregations they once considered their spiritual homes (Yip 1997). The exclusion of non-heterosexuals from public religious life raises questions about both the validity and reliability of traditional measures of religiosity used in studies of broader, more heterosexual populations when they are applied in research specifically targeting non-heterosexual people. For example, it seems problematic to use frequency of attendance as a proxy for religiosity when so many lesbians and gays are discouraged from attending religious services and systematically marginalized by religious rhetoric and activism that demonizes them or casts them as dangerous, sick or unworthy—by this measure, even gays and lesbians of faith would be deemed non-religious. There is no reason to doubt that for most, coming out into the world seems to require closing the door to the church or temple on the way out.

Variables measuring church attendance and intensity of religious belief were screened for inclusion in the regression. Bivariate correlations showed no significant relationship between regular family attendance at religious services during childhood and adolescence—at least two or three times per month to as often as several times per week—and attitudes toward

marriage,  $r=.031$ ,  $p=.502$ ,  $N=466$ . The relationship between current regular attendance at religious services and attitudes toward marriage was also not significant,  $r=.075$ ,  $p=.108$ ,  $N=466$ . Neither of these binary variables met the assumption of correlation with the dependent variable in regression, so were not used in the model.

When the dichotomous variables failed, I ran a similar test of correlation between the PMAS and the original, untransformed religious attendance variables, which yielded ordinal data and might be more sensitive. I asked how often the respondent attended religious services with family members before the age of 18, and later asked how often the respondent attended religious services today. The questions were slightly modified, but included the same answer categories as the original questions: never, less than once a year, several times a year, about once a month, two or three times a month, nearly every week, once a week, and more than once a week. Using these variables, family religious attendance during childhood was not correlated with current attitudes toward marriage,  $r=.070$ ,  $p=.130$ ,  $N=466$ . Current religious attendance was positively correlated with the PMAS,  $r=.128$ ,  $p=.006$ ,  $N=466$ , indicating weak support for the hypothesis that religious attendance influences pro-marriage attitudes.

To address the question of whether attendance is a valid measure of commitment to religion, I ran a bivariate correlation between current religious attendance and the respondents' self-reported level of religiosity. The item in the survey was straightforward: "All things considered, how religious would you say you are today?" Answers on a four-point scale ranged from "not at all religious" to "very religious." Less than half of respondents reported they were "not at all religious" ( $n=200$ ), but the majority reported they were somewhat ( $n=132$ ), moderately ( $n=102$ ), or very religious ( $n=32$ ). The positive correlation between attendance and self-reported religiosity was strong and significant,  $r=.670$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=465$ , but suggests only that people who claim to be religious are more likely to attend services. Crosstabulations reveal that many non-heterosexuals who claim they are not religious at all nevertheless attend religious services once or more per year, but not regularly. Most but

not all of these individuals are non-Christians, or attend religious meetings in alternative Christian settings defined earlier in this research as “non-Christian.” Those who are somewhat or moderately religious also attend services infrequently and irregularly, a pattern that is similar for both Christian and non-Christian respondents.

Despite the starkly hurtful messages of religious groups like the Westboro Baptist Church (e.g., <http://www.godhatesfags.com>), religion appears to be a relatively invisible aspect of lesbian and gay life. For non-heterosexuals of faith, Religion among non-heterosexuals of faith is probably a more private concern reflecting diverse strategies for fulfilling personal spiritual needs in the face of marginalization by both mainstream religious denominations and the religious communities that might have influenced young lesbians and gays as they came to terms with their sexual identities. Just because religious or Christian homosexuals do not attend services regularly does not mean that their core beliefs have changed. Rather, it more likely means that their religiosity must be forced into the closet they themselves vacated. The influence of religious belief—including variations from traditional religion—cannot be ignored, precisely because the innovative ways non-heterosexuals have found to express their faiths are probably the result of their exclusion from more traditional options for worship. For this reason, I concluded that the self-reported religiosity variable was a better measure of religiosity, and based on the significant and stronger correlation between this variable and the PMAS,  $r=.207$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $N=466$ , I included the variable as a measure of the strength of personal religious belief in the regression model.

#### *Commitment to Monogamy in Relationships*

In 2005, when data were collected for this study, the sexual revolution of the 1960s and 1970s was, for many, ancient history. Divorce was and remains relatively common among heterosexual couples, and does not constitute the threat to livelihood or social status it once did. All major US cities can boast a sizable population of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and other non-heterosexuals who live openly in relative—if sometimes uneasy—harmony with their neighbors. Queer or gay culture flourished in the years following the Stonewall Riots in

1969 (see discussion in Duberman 1994), an alternative parallel subculture that grew in economic, social and political influence through the 1970s and 1980s despite the devastating impact of AIDS on a generation of activists and influential thinkers who had helped make non-heterosexual life more visible, less dangerous, and more imaginable for those who came after. At the height of the AIDS crisis in the eighties, lesbians, gays and others had already reorganized their lives, communities and institutions to cope with the spread of HIV and the need to care for sick friends, lovers and others battling the disease (Nardi 1997). While policymakers and government agencies remained officially indifferent to both AIDS and the changes that were occurring in the grief-stricken, beleaguered queer communities around the country, heteronormative marriage culture was beginning to enjoy a resurgence in popular opinion and scholarly discourse.

Cultural conservatives busily promoted the idea that “family values” in the US had been dangerously eroded by the post-1960s-era critique of marriage and liberal ideologies that celebrated sexual freedom rather than the stability of traditional gender roles in families. Some pointed to the AIDS epidemic as indicative of how far the moral standards in the US had fallen, implying that it was homosexuality, not a resilient new virus, that was ultimately responsible for the deaths of so many. Those who lay claim to the “pro-family” mantle argued that if US society would simply turn back the clock to simpler times when more traditional values governed sexual lives, the social problems plaguing US society—juvenile delinquency, out-of-wedlock childbirth, teenage pregnancy, divorce, and HIV—would simply go away. There could be little doubt that gay and lesbian people were publicly called to account for the prevalence and spread of HIV, linked as they were to frightful stereotypes of sexual deviance, promiscuity and sickness by a persistent chorus of religious and conservative ideologues in media and politics. The moral panic surrounding HIV was integral to the revitalization of heteronormative “traditional family values” rhetoric that extolled the public health benefits of monogamy and other virtues.

Probably to the chagrin of the anti-gay mob, it is likely that the very same messages were trumpeting loud and clear to a large segment of the gay community which, by the time *Baehr v. Lewin* was argued in Hawaii (1993), had already begun to see monogamy as at least a personal strategy for minimizing HIV risk, and legal marriage—including the rights and privileges associated with it—as desirable to protect partners and children from the ravages of disease, poverty and political indifference. In many ways, heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals were no longer at cross purposes. The traditional family values crowd had organized a sustained assault on homosexuality and gay culture, but gay culture had already been changed, and homosexuals had begun to form relationships and families around more traditional values, including monogamy.

To capture the strength of commitment to monogamy in relationships, I used a modified version of the relationship styles variable discussed earlier (see Shernoff 1995). The relationship style variable—which merged actual relationship styles for coupled respondents with preferred relationship styles for single respondents—was recoded into a five-point scale indicating practical commitment to monogamy along a continuum from very weak (non-monogamous) to very strong (exclusively monogamous). Thus, in addition to the hypothesis concerning personal religiosity, the second step in the regression analysis here also tests the following hypothesis:

*H<sub>7</sub> The stronger one's commitment to a monogamous sexual ideology or lifestyle, the stronger the pro-marriage attitude score.*

The popular view, shaped by a sexual discourse of moral absolutism, is that monogamy is a black-and-white issue: one is either monogamous or not, so the idea that there is a “middle ground” for measuring monogamy might raise a few eyebrows. In response to the obvious question, I submit that measuring commitment to monogamy on a dichotomous scale is willfully disingenuous in a study of a fragmented population largely defined by sexual behaviors for which socially-compelling norms and socially-approved relationships do not exist. As I have already established, there is relatively strong support among non-

heterosexuals for monogamy as a central feature of marriage, but marriage is not yet a central feature of the intimate lives of most non-heterosexual people. Sexual negotiations among the people in this sample have been complicated by the uneven historical development of sexual subcultures that emerged from secrecy in the safer shadowlands of the closet. Strict monogamy, for same-sex attracted individuals, has not always been practical or even possible, despite the powerful moral imperative that drives it.

*The “Tea Room” Revisited: Insights on  
Monogamy and Tradition*

In his classic and highly controversial study of “tea room trade” (1975), Laud Humphreys studied public sex between men in the mid-1960s by serving as the “watchqueen” in public restrooms where men would meet surreptitiously for relatively quick and impersonal oral sex. Humphreys was able to interview some of the participants in this sexual subculture openly and *in situ*, but his study gained both notoriety and relevance because of Humphreys findings about the men whom he could not readily interview in the field. Humphreys recorded license plate numbers of many of the tea room’s visitors, traced them to their owners, secured addresses, then later disguised himself as a government health official and interviewed the men in their homes. Leaving aside the ethical problems with this approach—the debates over which have by now elevated the study to almost legendary status among sociologists and students—some of Humphreys’ findings are instructive, and might help to clarify the need to measure commitment to monogamy in degrees rather than binary categories. Specifically, Humphreys found that the social stereotype that ascribed deviant public sexuality to homosexual men was a gross overstatement. Humphreys’ research demonstrated that public sexual contact between men was not limited to self-identified homosexuals or bisexuals. More than a third of tea room patrons were heterosexuals seeking only sexual release, who were not enacting a queer identity. A bare majority of the men were married, although half of those men were bisexual. Definitively or stereotypically gay men made up only a small minority of

the individuals Humphreys encountered in his journey through what was assumed to be a uniquely gay sexual underworld.

The truth is that even during an historical period in which monogamy was both highly valued and strictly enforced through powerful norms of heterosexuality, dramatically limited opportunities to divorce without incurring significant social costs, and repressive public policies targeting gay communities (Kaiser 1997, Chauncey 1995, Duberman 1994), the practice of monogamy was likely inconsistent across the adult population, or at least across the population of men in the United States. It is unlikely that the married heterosexual men in Humphreys' study would have seen themselves as non-monogamous—much less actively endorsed a non-monogamous lifestyle—simply because they occasionally and anonymously received fellatio and a hurried orgasm from a willing stranger in an impersonal public setting. If we assume that one is either monogamous or not, not one of the subjects in Humphreys' study was technically or unambiguously monogamous. Rather, the men gave accounts of their personal lives that featured ideological commitment to *fidelity*—a value—rather than practical commitment to sexual *exclusivity*—a behavior.

The implication that should be taken from this discussion and Humphreys' research is that commitment to monogamy in relationships is relative, sensitive to social circumstances, opportunity and risk, the sexual politics of desire, and the structure of primary sexual relationships. One could conceivably argue that many of the bisexual and heterosexual men—particularly the marrieds—in Humphreys' sample at best *aspired* to monogamy because they valued it, but clearly failed to practice it. While marriage did not prevent non-monogamy, it certainly constrained it. The married heterosexual had a vested interest in limiting same-sex extramarital activity in terms of frequency and location, which reduces opportunity and narrows the risk of discovery and consequent public stigmatization that might be brought about from marital conflict or divorce in the 1960s. That so many heterosexual men frequented the tea room for impersonal and detached sexual release suggests that they were actively working to maintain the illusion that their private failures

to adhere to norms of monogamy did not threaten or diminish the public ideological commitments to marital fidelity that protected them from marginalization as sexual deviants. That so few homosexual individuals—fewer than one in five, according to Humphreys—visited the tea rooms tells us virtually nothing about the intimate relationships of gay men during that time, and absolutely nothing about the strength of monogamy as sexual ideology in the queer community or the degree to which commitment in same-sex couples, who were even more invisible during the period of Humphreys’ study, encouraged or constrained non-monogamy.

Commitment to monogamy in sexual relationships must be understood in terms of constraint. Apart from challenging and undermining a number of negative stereotypes about gay men, Humphreys inadvertently demonstrated that measuring monogamy is more complicated than simply dividing people—even straight people, or married people—into those who have sex outside their primary relationship and those who do not. Doing so disconnects social practice from social structure, and inhibits understanding of monogamy as an institutional imperative that binds sexual activity to marital status. That is, monogamy is essentially a set of modern cultural beliefs, values and norms so embedded in marriage culture as to seem the only natural and “normal” way to organize sexual relationships in human communities. For heterosexuals, to be married has long been understood to entail an explicit obligation to conform to norms of fidelity as well as an explicit right to expect sexual exclusivity from a partner. Same-sex couples are denied marriage, which renders both the obligations and rights associated with marriage implicit, unstated, and thus less enforceable through either formal or informal channels.

Theoretically, there should be a weaker inclination toward monogamy in non-heterosexual populations than in heterosexual populations, but as even Humphreys’ forty-year-old data suggest, the strength or weakness of monogamy cannot be measured in either population unless negotiated interpersonal and social constraints are taken into account. If marriage is unavailable—as a normative structure constraining sexual



activity—then non-heterosexual people are forced by circumstance to negotiate a more personal, more individualized commitment to monogamy and sexual exclusivity in their intimate relationships. While heterosexuals might also engage in such fluid negotiations, these negotiations proceed from a tacit understanding that monogamy is expected, so they must negotiate degrees of *deviation* from the norm—non-monogamy. Non-heterosexuals, given the absence of structural constraint, the relative difficulty or impossibility of public recognition of their relationships, and a cultural and political history shaped by resistance to normative sex roles and sexual practices must alternatively negotiate degrees of *conformity* to a set of rules that were designed to exclude rather than include them—monogamy.

In this study, commitment to monogamy is a reflection of the negotiated rules between couples that produce diverse configurations of relationships relative to aspirations to the norm of monogamy; that is, how close the relationship style practiced by individuals and couples comes to a form of strict monogamy on the part of both members of the dyad. Commitment to monogamy is very strong when respondents describe their intimate relationships—current or preferred—as strictly sexually exclusive, implying that the relationship style is negotiated by the couple and that the rules are binding upon both

Table 14. Relationship Styles Recoded as Commitment to Monogamy, N=466

Commitment to monogamy is ...	...when relationship style is...	...and is recoded as...	<i>n</i>	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Weakest	<i>Non-monogamous/acknowledged open relationship; or non-sexual lovers</i>	1 Non-monogamy	86	18.5	18.5
Weaker	<i>Primarily sexually exclusive/non-monogamy with rules</i>	2 Limited monogamy	84	18.0	36.5
Neither strong nor weak	<i>Undecided or no preference</i>	3 Undecided	13	2.8	39.3
Stronger	<i>Primarily sexually exclusive/ménages</i>	4 Limited non-monogamy	33	7.1	46.4
Strongest	<i>Monogamous/strictly sexually exclusive</i>	5 Monogamy	250	53.6	100.0
			<i>Total N=466</i>	100.0	

members of the intimate dyad. Commitment to monogamy is very weak when respondents describe their relationships as “open relationships;” that is, when both partners assume that monogamy is either not possible or not desirable. Table 14 shows how the original relationship style variable was recoded, as well as the distributions of the new variable measuring commitment to monogamy in personal relationships.

The new variable, *monostyl*, was significantly correlated with pro-marriage attitudes,  $r=.318, p<.001, N=466$ , indicating that the aspiration to monogamy is positively linked to support for a traditional understanding of the link between sex and marriage. The magnitude of the effect in the bivariate correlation is stronger than any one of the identity markers, although the correlation produces different—and somewhat surprising—results for bisexuals ( $r=.380, p<.001, n=187$ ) when analyzed separately from homosexuals ( $r=.197, p<.001, n=279$ ). Additionally, it appears that the relationship between commitment to monogamy and pro-marriage attitudes is significantly stronger for single individuals, both bisexual ( $r=.445, p<.01, n=91$ ) and homosexual ( $r=.230, p=.005, n=147$ ), than for coupled individuals. The relationship between monogamy and pro-marriage attitudes is significant for coupled bisexuals ( $r=.317, p=.002, n=96$ ), but does not quite reach significance for coupled homosexuals ( $r=.169, p=.052, n=132$ ).

These findings might appear at first glance to contradict earlier results that suggested bisexuals are less likely to be monogamous than homosexuals, but that would be a misinterpretation of the data. Bivariate analyses tell us the direction of correlations, but do not explain or predict outcomes. For example, the finding that there is a strong, positive correlation between pro-marriage attitudes and commitment to monogamy among single bisexuals in this sample tells us that the two variables covary in the same direction: As commitment to monogamy increases, so does the score on the PMAS. It is also true, however, that as commitment to monogamy decreases, the PMAS score also decreases.

The statistically insignificant correlation between the PMAS and *monostyl* for coupled homosexual respondents is unique, as the correlation is significant for all other groups.

Given that a larger proportion of gays and lesbians in the sample are monogamous, and that bisexuals in this sample are much more likely to be non-monogamous, the significant differences in R observed between the two groups suggest that the strength of commitment to monogamy probably predicts weaker or lower PMAS scores for bisexuals than for homosexuals. In this sample, bisexuals are likely to be women in heterosexual marriages, and all but one bisexual man in this sample is married to a woman, which could imply that the ability to enter into legal marriage changes the nature of sexual negotiations within couples as I have suggested: people who can marry tend to negotiate non-monogamy as an alternative to the normative assumptions of marriage, while people who cannot marry tend to negotiate toward monogamy as an alternative to forms of relationship and sexual expression that have emerged in a subculture without marriage.

#### *Regression Model 2: Analysis and Results*

To argue that “queer subculture” has been largely shaped by the absence of marriage is not the same as stereotyping gay culture as inherently antithetical to monogamy, or lesbians and gay men themselves as “anti-marriage.” These stereotypes assume that non-heterosexual people actively reject monogamy, and thus monogamous marriage, but none of the data I have collected indicate that this is true across the spectrum of queer identities. Instead, what these data suggest is that lifestyle choices—such as whether to practice some form of religiosity or spirituality, or whether to adhere to norms of monogamy in intimate relationships—are understood by non-heterosexuals as highly individualized choices shaped by exclusion from the heteronormative community as well as the structural supports that sustain the privileges of heterosexuality, including legal marriage. Having established in Model 1 that gendered sexual identity itself has a negligible effect on pro-marriage attitudes, I hypothesize that religion and monogamy influence attitudes toward marriage when identity is controlled. Whereas Model 1 was a standard multiple regression using only identity marker variables as predictors against the dependent variable PMAS, Model 2 represents the second step of a sequential or hierarchical regression wherein identity markers are entered

into the regression equation first as controls, followed by two new independent predictors, personal religious belief and commitment to monogamy, to determine whether inclusion of this information would improve predictions of scores on the PMAS. Hypotheses specifically tested in Model 2 are as follows:

H<sub>6</sub> *The more religious one is, the more positive is one's view of marriage, and*

H<sub>7</sub> *The stronger one's commitment to a monogamous sexual ideology or lifestyle, the stronger the pro-marriage attitude score.*

While the two new predictor variables were significantly correlated with the dependent variable PMAS, they were not correlated with one another, both conditions for inclusion in the model. Further screening, however, showed that the distributions for both variables were skewed. Personal religious belief was moderately positively skewed, while commitment to monogamy was moderately negatively skewed. Neither square root nor logarithmic transformation corrected the skewness in either variable, and since tentative analyses using the transformed variables produced substantially the same results as analyses using the original variables, neither variable was transformed. The untransformed variables are used in all analyses.

Model 2 of the sequential regression is summarized in Table 15, which shows the unstandardized regression coefficients (B), standardized regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ), intercept and R,  $R^2$ , and adjusted  $R^2$  after all predictors were entered into the regression equation, including gendered sexual identity markers for which "gay men" is the reference category in step 1 (initial control variables), and lifestyle variables *hourlg* and *monostyl* in step 2 (predictors). With all identity markers and predictor variables in the equation, the model remains significant,  $R^2=.176$ ,  $F(7, 457)=12.897$ ,  $p<.001$ , and explains more than 15 percent of the total variability in PMAS scores (adjusted  $R^2=.163$ ) compared to the four percent explained by identity markers alone. Together, the two new lifestyle predictors in Model 2 explain an additional 12.8 percent of variability in pro-marriage attitudes,  $F_2(2, 457)=35.35$ ,  $p<.001$ , over the identity markers in Model 1,  $R^2=.048$ ,  $F_1(5, 459)=4.62$ ,  $p<.001$ .

Table 15. Model 2—Sequential Regression of Lifestyles and Identity Markers on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS)

Variables In the Equation			Model 1 Identity Markers			Model 2 Lifestyles		
	Mean	SD	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Bisexual Men	--	--	-1.368	.869	-.076	-.488	.821	-.027
Bisexual Women	--	--	-2.676	.588	-.237**	-2.127	.567	-.188**
Lesbian Women	--	--	-.541	.669	-.041	-.857	.633	-.064
Age under 30	--	--	.888	.527	.083	.843	.492	.079
Coupled	--	--	.736	.499	.070	.557	.469	.053
Personal Religious Belief	1.93	.959	--	--	--	1.225	.238	.224**
Monogamous Lifestyle	3.59	1.670	--	--	--	.895	.143	.285**
Model Correlation Coefficients			$R^2=.048$			$R^2=.176$		
			Adjusted $R^2=.038$			Adjusted $R^2=.163$		
			R=.219			R=.419		

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

The results here suggest that the hypothesis,  $H_6$  *The more religious one is, the more positive is one's view of marriage*, is confirmed. Controlling for the effects of gendered sexual identity, relationship status, and age, the strength of personal religious belief has a significant positive effect on PMAS scores, but the magnitude of the effect is only moderate ( $\beta = .224$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The effect of the strength of commitment to monogamy on PMAS scores is stronger, but not substantially different ( $\beta = .285$ ,  $p < .001$ ), a finding that confirms  $H_7$  *The stronger one's commitment to a monogamous sexual ideology or lifestyle, the stronger the pro-marriage attitude score*. These two variables are stronger predictors than any of the identity markers included in the model. Both are positively associated with higher scores on the PMAS, suggesting that individuals who see themselves as strongly religious and who demonstrate a stronger commitment to monogamy in their personal relationships—both dating and long-term domestic partnerships, civil unions or marriages—are significantly likely to hold more traditional values toward marriage. Put another way, those who are religious and monogamous are more likely to be assimilationist in their politics regarding same-sex

marriage, perhaps reflecting the degree to which they have internalized and conformed to the dominant heteronormative expectations of late modern marriage as a way to integrate themselves and their loved ones into the US family system.

Stronger religious belief, be it a form of Christianity or some other religion, appears to reliably predict assimilationist ideology among respondents. The norm of monogamy is similarly influential. The more constraint on sexual non-monogamy experienced or negotiated by respondents, the more likely are respondents to hold attitudes toward marriage that are recognizably traditional or supportive of marriage as it is currently defined in US culture. The addition of both variables improved prediction of PMAS scores, so that this model accounts for almost 20 percent of variability in pro-marriage attitude scores. In the next step in my analysis, I examine the relationship between marital expectations and attitudes, as well as the influence of what some have called “divorce culture” on non-heterosexuals’ attitudes toward marriage.

#### State of the Union: Marriage vs Divorce Culture

As I have already established, assimilationists and liberationists are divided as to whether marriage *sui generis* is actually a social good or worthy goal for non-heterosexual individuals or queer politics in general. The assimilationist perspective on same-sex marriage insists that marriage is an integrative institution leading to emotionally satisfying, stable relationships; a sense of purpose and responsibility that encourages economic and financial stability; and the end of discrimination against non-heterosexuals and their families by neighbors and communities. In the society imagined by assimilationist thinkers, same-sex marriage is both possible and socially acceptable, and individuals in queer families are happier, healthier and more productive members of society. In other words, the perspective assumes that marriage makes life better for lesbians, gays and other non-heterosexuals.

The liberationist perspective dismisses marriage as the catalyst for equality, pointing instead to the increased social control of bodies and sexuality that marriage has historically

represented, and the tendency of the marital institution to rely on constraining or curtailing individual rights, most especially of women, in order to survive across generations and epochs. Liberationists criticize the assimilationist discourse as an overly conservative one that perpetuates stereotypes of gays, lesbians, and the subcultures they have created on their own as deviant, somehow not good enough for mainstream heterosexual society. While assimilationists argue that marriage makes life better, more extreme liberationists counter that marriage is an attempt to make individual non-heterosexuals “better,” or less deviant, by encouraging them to reify the very institutions and social structures that oppress them in the first place, and thus abandon the late modern liberal political project to undermine or transform political and social institutions to guarantee more, not less, individual freedom and equality for all. From a liberationist perspective, marriage is not necessarily a catalyst for positive change, but a tool for quelling dissent which divides the non-heterosexual body politic into Seidman’s (2001) “good sexual citizens,” i.e., gays and lesbians in monogamous heteroanalogous relationships, and “bad sexual citizens,” including those who reject marriage or reject sexual norms that stigmatize alternative relationships and family structures that do not fit into the narrow range of sexual expression reserved for “marriage.” The liberationist view suggests that the special status of marriage marginalizes other sexual minorities by defining even more stringently who receives the benefits of legitimacy from governments and society and who does not.

Although the impact of same-sex marriage on sexual politics and queer culture is probably overstated in both camps, adherents to both ideologies acknowledge that many, if not most, non-heterosexual people are ambivalent about marriage. Regardless of ideological differences, assimilationists and liberationists appear to agree on the importance of marriage rights to the gay and lesbian community. Respondents were asked three questions about the importance of marriage: “How important would you say the right to marry is to you, personally? To your friends? To the gay/lesbian community?” Responses to these questions, which were measured on a 7-point scale where 1 was “not important at all” and 7 was “very

important,” indicate that while the right to marry is very important to most individuals in this sample ( $M=5.51$ , median=6) and their friends ( $M=5.46$ , median=6), it is even more important to the community ( $M=6.27$ , median=7). A t-test using the mean of the “personal importance” item as the test value showed that the the mean score for “importance to the gay/lesbian community” item was significantly different from the test value,  $t(465)=15.9$ ,  $p<.001$ . This result suggests that whether marriage is viewed as a personal, individual affirmation of love, a set of legal rights, a path to social acceptance, or the same old patriarchal ball and chain, non-heterosexuals across the ideological spectrum view same-sex marriage as a worthy political goal for the queer community.

While there might be some disagreement about what marriage means to individuals on a personal level, it is clear that marriage rights are central to the current political project of gay rights movements. Love it or hate it, securing the right to marry is a collective concern within the non-heterosexual community that binds liberationists and assimilationists to a common cause. Same-sex marriage would, with some certainty, legally and socially box all non-heterosexuals into the normatively regulated relationship pattern that includes monogamy and long-term commitment—no doubt provoking personal and political claustrophobia among the more sexually marginalized or socially libertine. Inside that box, however, is a set of rights, responsibilities and social benefits for married individuals and their families that, apparently, assimilationists and liberationists alike find difficult to sacrifice for a thin chance at more radical social change. An institution that at once constrains individuals and expands gay rights: This is a tall order for matrimony.

#### *Expectations for Marriage*

What do the participants in this study, and perhaps non-heterosexuals everywhere, expect of marriage? Respondents were asked how they thought their lives would be different if they could legally marry their romantic partners (or if they were already married, how their lives have changed since they married their partners)—better, the same, or worse. Six dimensions of difference were measured, including financial security, personal freedom, control over



Table 16. Distributions of Positive Effects of Marriage Items, Percentages (N=466)

Effect of legal marriage...	Better	The same	Worse
...on financial security	66.3	30.5	3.2
...on personal freedom	22.5	66.1	11.4
...on control over money	28.5	64.8	6.7
...on sex life	33.0	62.1	4.9
...on current/future children	48.5	49.1	2.4
...on personal overall happiness	56.9	39.7	3.4

money, sex life, current or future children, and overall happiness. Table 16 details the distribution (percentages) of responses in each category.

The six items were recoded into dichotomous variables, with “better” coded as 1, and all other responses coded 0. The items were summed to produce a scale that measures the strength of the perceived positive effects of marriage on one’s life. A reliability analysis conducted on the dichotomous items included in the scale yielded an Alpha of .6841 for N=466 cases, acceptable for a six-item scale and comparable to the Alpha obtained from analysis of the original variables coded 0 to 2 (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .6831$ ). Item analyses revealed that inclusion of all six variables produced the highest Alpha. Scores on this Positive Effects of Marriage scale (PEM, *efxmarp2*) ranged from 1 to 6, and are distributed more or less normally with a mean of 2.56 and median of 3. Higher scores on this scale indicate higher expectations for marriage, in that respondents assume that legal marriage improves or would improve conditions in more areas of their personal lives. Using this scale in analyses, I hypothesize that

*H<sub>8</sub> The more positively individuals view the effects of marriage, the higher their pro-marriage attitude scores.*

Analysis reveals that the PEM is positively correlated with the Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale ( $r=.227, p<.001$ ), thus confirming the hypothesis and meeting the first criterion for inclusion in further regression analyses. The PEM is significantly correlated with commitment to monogamy ( $p=.034$ ), but the correlation is statistically weak ( $r=.098$ ).

Assuming the sustained influences of identity markers and lifestyles variables already in the regression, the addition of the PEM should improve the explanatory power of the model.

### *Commitment to Divorce Culture*

Many *Quest for Quotidian* respondents are or were married at some point, and many more are prohibited by law from experiencing divorce precisely because they are and have always been denied the right to marry. Fewer than 15 percent of all respondents have personally experienced divorce, and while it cannot be determined from the data here, it is possible that many of these divorces occurred because the respondents were not very good at being heterosexual, not because they were bad at being married. Moreover, I have already established that a significant majority of the participants in this study spent their childhood and youth in intact families and homes that were not impacted by parental divorce or marital disruption—no living with a single mother, no spending weekends with a Disneyland dad, none of the particular conflicts and struggles associated with the process of divorce and subsequent custodial arrangements, and none of the adjustment problems associated with the remarriage of a parent or stepparents. Essentially, most do not come from families that modeled divorce culture. Rather, we can reasonably assume that most of the non-heterosexuals in this study—including and perhaps especially those gays and lesbians who are now divorced from their different-sex partners—were socialized into a culture of marriage, no different from that to which many of their heterosexual peers were exposed.

The final predictor in the model is the influence of divorce culture on attitudes toward marriage. I hypothesize that

H<sub>9</sub> *The stronger the commitment to divorce culture, the weaker are attitudes favorable to marriage.*

Operationalizing the concept of “divorce culture” presents a problem, especially within a subculture that generally does not marry—the necessary prerequisite for divorce. Divorcing itself no more declares one’s antipathy toward marriage than having one’s groceries bagged in plastic rather than paper announces to the world one’s plan to single-handedly destroy the

environment. Each is an example of an individual making a choice—one that may have long-lasting consequences positive or negative, to be sure—from a limited range of socially- and culturally-defined options. Neither having divorced nor having experienced parental divorce as a child indicates a commitment to a culture of divorce; both are simply circumstances derived from individuals exercising their right to dissolve their marriages. The vast majority of lesbians and gay men in the United States do not have the right to marry, and thus cannot choose to divorce, so seeking behavioral indicators for commitment to divorce culture in this population is more or less a pointless exercise. Therefore, I define “divorce culture” as a set of beliefs that justify or rationalize divorce as a viable alternative to marriage.

Imagine that nothing is worse than a bad marriage, and since lifelong marriage is unrealistic anyway, one should expect to divorce at some point. Since divorce is inevitable, getting a divorce should be easy, even if there are young children involved, because everyone knows that divorce does not diminish one’s ability to parent. This narrative is representative of what could be considered a “pro-divorce” discourse, a cultural script that is ubiquitous in American society and certainly familiar to non-heterosexuals and heterosexuals alike. Heterosexuals—because they may marry and thus can experience divorce—have drawn upon and deployed this script consistently to account for their own failed marriages, and have thus deeply embedded this narrative into the cultural discourse on marriage and family. Importantly, the institutionalization of divorce culture over the past several decades cannot be attributed exclusively to non-heterosexuals, or to lesbian, gay or queer subcultures. Divorce culture is a product of the heterosexual marriage culture from which it emerged, a response to the most significant change in the American family system in the twentieth century: easy-to-obtain, widespread no-fault divorce.

Most respondents have not experienced their parents’ divorce, and just under 60 percent of *Quest for Quotidian* respondents have never known an America in which divorce was rare or difficult to obtain. If only those individuals who were no more than 10 years old when no-fault divorce was introduced in California in 1970 are counted, the percentage jumps to

more than 80 percent. This means that almost all of the participants in this study have been exposed to both the possibility of divorce as well as the cultural script that justifies divorce for most if not all their lives, as have their heterosexual siblings, friends, co-workers, neighbors and other contemporaries. Divorce culture is part of their lives, a discourse that has for more than 30 years competed with more traditional discourses that support marriage. Some have argued that divorce culture has ultimately won, and that the American family system has been reshaped and weakened by its victory (Whitehead 1998).

To capture the strength of divorce culture among non-heterosexuals, I analyzed five attitudinal measures from the original 27 included on the questionnaire. Each was recoded so that higher scores would indicate a stronger commitment to divorce culture as defined in the narrative above. Following are the indicators:

1. Sure, divorce is bad, but a lousy marriage is even worse.
2. Given how long people are living these days, it is unrealistic to expect a couple to remain married to one another for life.
3. Society would be better off if divorces were harder to get. (reversed)
4. It should be harder for parents of children under age 18 to get a divorce than it is for couples who do not have young children. (reversed)
5. If they are determined to do so, divorced couples can parent as effectively as can most parents who live together.

Scores on these five indicators were summed to form an attitude scale score, “Divorce Culture.” Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach’s alpha of .60, and although item analysis revealed that exclusion of “it is unrealistic to expect a couple to remain married to one another for life” would increase the alpha to .6465, I opted to retain the item in the scale, as it measures an essential element of divorce culture—the assumption of marital impermanence. The Divorce Culture scale was significantly and more strongly correlated with the PMAS than any other variable analyzed in this research so far ( $r = -.459, p < .001$ ). To correct moderate negative skewness in the distribution, I applied a square root

transformation to the original scale to yield the new variable *dc\_final*, which is included in the third step of the hierarchical regression.

### *Regression Model 3: Analysis and Results*

The results of the third step in sequential regression, Model 3, are presented in Table 17, and show that adding expectations for marriage and commitment to divorce culture at this step improves the overall model significantly,  $R^2 = .367$ ,  $F_3(9, 455) = 29.274$ ,  $p < .001$ , with the variables explaining an additional 19.1 percent of the variability in PMAS scores (adjusted  $R^2 = .354$ ). Including identity markers, lifestyle variables, and the two new predictors, Model 3 explains more than 30 percent of the variance in attitudes toward marriage compared to Model 2 (adjusted  $R^2 = .163$ ).

With all variables so far in the model, the strongest significant predictor of PMAS scores is commitment to divorce culture ( $\beta = -.411$ ,  $p < .001$ ). High commitment to divorce culture, then, is associated with relatively low scores on the Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale. The expected effects of marriage significantly influence the PMAS ( $R^2 = .160$ ,  $p < .001$ ), but the effect is the weakest of the four independent predictor variables in the regression. Commitment to monogamy ( $R^2 = .229$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and personal religious belief ( $R^2 = .172$ ,  $p < .001$ ) remain significant positive influences in the model, but the effects of each fall far short of the strength of divorce culture as a predictor of pro-marriage attitudes. Finally, all identity markers but one fail to reach significance in Model 3, which suggests that age and relationship status play little to no role in the formation and maintenance of attitudes favorable or unfavorable to traditional marriage. On the other hand, gender and sexuality do play some role. The regression results predict that bisexual women are more likely than gay men to hold negative attitudes toward traditional marriage ( $\beta = -.100$ ,  $p = .026$ ), but this result should be interpreted cautiously, as the actual PMAS scores for bisexual women are probably not as dramatically different in practical terms as the statistics suggest. Despite the small effect size, this finding implies that lesbians and gay men are collectively more similar to one another than different, perhaps more “traditional” in their approach to coupling and

Table 17. Model 3—Sequential Regression of Identity Markers, Lifestyles, and Marriage v. Divorce Variables on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS)

Variables In the Equation	Mean	SD	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
			Identity Markers			Lifestyles			Marriage vs. Divorce		
			B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$	B	SE B	$\beta$
Bisexual Men	--	--	-1.368	.869	-.076	-.488	.821	-.027	-.023	.726	-.001
Bisexual Women	--	--	-2.676	.588	-.237**	-2.127	.567	-.188**	-1.132	.507	-.100*
Lesbian Women	--	--	-.541	.669	-.041	-.857	.633	-.064	.176	.563	.013
Age under 30	--	--	.888	.527	.083	.843	.492	.079	.004	.439	.000
Coupled	--	--	.736	.499	.070	.557	.469	.053	.256	.417	.025
Personal Religious Belief	1.93	.959	--	--	--	1.225	.238	.224**	.944	.210	.172**
Monogamous Lifestyle	3.59	1.670	--	--	--	.895	.143	.285**	.717	.127	.229**
Expected Effects of Marriage	2.56	1.753	--	--	--	--	--	--	.477	.115	.160**
Divorce Culture (sq. root)	2.85	.663	--	--	--	--	--	--	-3.247	.309	-.411**
Intercept			26.619	.480		20.966	.808		30.109	1.228	
Model Correlation Coefficients					$R^2 = .048$			$R^2 = .176$			$R^2 = .367$
					Adjusted $R^2 = .038$			Adjusted $R^2 = .163$			Adjusted $R^2 = .354$
					R = .219			R = .419			R = .606

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

long-term relationships. If it is true that sexuality, more than gender, differentiates the various groups within this sample, such a finding would be consistent with findings presented earlier in this study.

The dramatic influence of divorce culture on pro-marriage attitudes among non-heterosexuals cannot be ignored. It suggests that anti-marriage attitudes among this population are driven most strongly by the same forces that, according to the conservative perspective, have undermined heterosexual marriage and the family since the late 1960s. If commitment to divorce culture is the definitive predictor of low pro-marriage attitudes, we can finally put to bed the notion that gay culture produces anti-marriage attitudes. Instead, it appears that the culture of marriage emerging in lesbian and gay communities is informed more strongly by the history of *heterosexual* divorce.

#### Controls and Biases

The results of regression analysis so far indicate that many of the factors that influence heterosexual support for marriage also influence non-heterosexual support for marriage. Whether these results might lead to more or less accurate generalizations from the *Quest for Quotidian* sample to the population of non-heterosexuals is debatable, however, because of biases in the sample. In the fourth and final step of the sequential regression, I add a series of variables to the equation to control for biases associated with social networks, type of religion, political persuasion, social class, geographic distribution of the sample in the United States, and recruitment method. All of the predictors introduced in Model 4 are dummy variables, dichotomous variables derived from existing categorical or ordinal variables in the survey. All control variables were entered into the model simultaneously.

#### *Queer Social Networks, Christianity, and Politics*

The persistence of the mythical “homosexual agenda” reflects a tendency in popular political, and especially anti-gay, discourses to treat non-heterosexuals as a unified body politic. The most extreme expression of this assumption comes unsurprisingly from the

religious right, which views lesbians and gays as a cohesive, conspiratorial elite. To these cultural conservatives, queer people are nothing less than a radicalized social club organized not to secure basic human rights or inclusive citizenship for gay and lesbian individuals, but to destroy the institutions and traditions that rightly exclude non-heterosexuals from the social and personal benefits of family and public life.

What is more astonishing than the idea of a “homosexual agenda” is the fact that there is no such a thing. Clearly the history of injustice experienced by these people calls for unity, resistance, and perhaps even revolution. The lives of modern bisexuals, lesbians and gays are shaped by the discrimination they experience. Instead of banding together to fight for liberation, however, the current trend appears to be that non-heterosexuals are working quietly and independently toward assimilation.

One could argue that perhaps the vengeance motif so prevalent in Christian fundamentalist rhetoric (Ruthven 2005; Armstrong 2001) colors the way anti-gay conservatives interpret pro-gay activism. Is it really that surprising that people who believe everyone who does not share their particular brands of faith will be cast into a lake of fire for all eternity would view any group that challenges their claim to social and political privilege to be worthy of anything but exclusion, or even death? I think not. To the self-appointed “chosen” of God, protecting heterosexual privilege—e.g., protecting marriage—warrants almost any sacrifice, including the degradation, humiliation, and marginalization of their fellow citizens in the name of “the family.” If those fellow citizens are not heterosexual, according to the rhetoric of cultural warriors in the United States, then they definitely deserve such treatment for their audacity. In truth, denying homosexual people the right to marry is the least that can be done, which might explain the eagerness of politicians to embrace the one-man, one-woman definition of marriage while distancing themselves from more radical anti-gay rhetoric and actions.

Regardless of the volume of the conservative rant in popular media, we know that non-heterosexuals are not a national club, but a diversified segment of the population



with a presence in almost all US communities. Nevertheless, non-heterosexual people are collectively different from the heterosexual majority, even if the most important differences are the result, not a cause, of structured social inequality sustained by ages-old prejudice that favors heterosexuals. We know that gay people have gay friends, no less than straight people are likely to build relationships with straight friends. I have shown that many non-heterosexuals are religious, but whether they practice a form of Christianity probably depends on the level of acceptance or rejection they have themselves experienced in Christian faith communities. I have similarly demonstrated that while non-heterosexuals are unlikely to identify themselves as very conservative, politically, that does not necessarily mean that their politics are very liberal, or even substantially different from the politics of their more conservative heterosexual neighbors.

In response to conservative concerns over the presumed homogeneity of queer communities and politics, I control for the effects of queer social networks—that is, networks that are more homosexual than heterosexual—I included a dichotomous version of the *networkq* variable, coded 1 for “half or more friends are homosexual” and 0 for “less than half of friends are homosexual.” I also include a control for political views, coded 1 for “very liberal”—which is the presumed political orientation of lesbians and gays—and 0 for all other responses. Finally, I control for the specific influence of Christian faith, as opposed to other religious beliefs, in the sample with a variable that measures whether the respondent is “Christian now” (coded 1) or not (coded 0). Of these three variables, two are significantly and negatively correlated with the Pro-Marriage Attitude Scale: “Christian now” ( $r=-.234$ ) and “Very Liberal” ( $r=-.246$ ). Surprisingly, individuals in the sample who identify as Christians today might have lower scores on the PMAS than those who are not. That very liberal political views are associated with lower PMAS scores suggests that the most liberal among respondents are likely to take a dimmer view of assimilation than their less liberal counterparts. What is surprising is that claiming a Christian identity today is similarly

associated with lower PMAS scores. Notably, there is no significant relationship between the composition of social or friendship networks and attitudes toward marriage.

#### *Social Class: Race, Education and Income*

In the *Quest for Quotidian* sample—as in many samples of non-heterosexuals and purposive samples generally—white, college-educated, and high-income respondents are overrepresented. Race is controlled in analysis using a dummy variable where non-white responses are coded 1, and white responses coded 0. I control for college education of the respondent, coded 1 if the respondent holds at least a 4-year degree. Finally, I control for respondents income, using a binary version of the “relational” income variable. Relational income is (1) respondent’s personal income if single and/or reports household income from parents, roommates or other family members; or (2) household income if the respondent is married, in a civil union, or in a domestic partnership. The dummy variable is coded 0 for incomes less than \$75,000, and 1 for incomes of \$75,000 or more per year.

#### *Real and Virtual Geography*

To control for the differential effects of geographic region, I included dummy variables for three of the four census regions in the US—the midwest, south and northeast. The western region, which includes the majority of responses, is the reference category for these variables. I was able to obtain more responses from all regions of the United States in large part because of online recruiting through blogs, social networking sites and public bulletin boards. To account for the effects of online recruiting versus more traditional methods (face-to-face contact, print advertising, direct invitation, etc.), I included a control variable that indicates whether respondents were recruited anonymously online (coded 1) or not (coded 0).

#### *Regression Model 4: Analysis and Results*

All control variables were added to the equation at the fourth and final step of sequential regression on the Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale. Following Green’s (1991) rules of thumb for assessing the adequacy of ratio of cases to predictors, the minimum sample size for analyzing

the 19 predictors included in the model—five identity marker variables, four continuous independent predictors, and 10 variables controlling for demographic characteristics and sampling biases—is 202 for multiple correlations and 122 for individual predictors (see Tabatchnik and Fidell 2007), so even with a dramatic increase in the number of predictors in the model, the *Quest for Quotidian* sample used here is still above minimum sample size requirements.

With all predictors and controls included, Model 4 remained significant,  $R^2=.401$ ,  $F_4(19,445)=15.65$ ,  $p<.001$ . Table 18 displays the results of the regression, including means and standard deviations for continuous predictors, unstandardized coefficients (B), standard error, and standardized coefficients ( $\beta$ ) for all predictors, and intercepts, R,  $R^2$ , and adjusted  $R^2$  for all models. The final model explains 37.5 percent of the variability in attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals in the sample. The inclusion of the control variables explains an additional three percent ( $R^2$  change=.034) of variation in scores on the PMAS compared to the Model 3, which omitted the controls [ $R^2= .367$ ,  $F_3(9, 455)=29.274$ ,  $p<.001$ ].

Commitment to divorce culture remains the strongest predictor of weaker pro-marriage attitudes in the final model ( $\beta = -.370$ ,  $p<.001$ ), while expectations for marriage, personal religious belief and commitment to monogamy are significant predictors of stronger pro-marriage attitudes. Among the control variables, two were significant predictors. Individuals with at least a four-year college degree are likely to have lower scores on the PMAS than those without ( $\beta = -.108$ ,  $p=.008$ ), although the effect is relatively weak. Slightly more significant and stronger is the influence of “very liberal” political views on pro-marriage attitudes ( $\beta = -.125$ ,  $p=.002$ ). Notably, when liberal political views are controlled in the sample, the relationship between status as a bisexual woman and pro-marriage attitudes virtually disappears ( $\beta = .072$ ), implying that sexuality and politics might be more closely intertwined among some women, so that political views mediate the relationship between sexual identity

Table 18. Model 4—Full Sequential Regression on Pro-Marriage Attitudes Scale (PMAS)

Variables In the Equation	Mean	SD	Model 1 Identity Markers			Model 2 Lifestyles			Model 3 Marriage vs. Divorce			Model 4 Controls		
			B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$	B	SE	$\beta$
Bisexual Men	--	--	-1.368	.869	-.076	-.488	.821	-.027	-.023	.726	-.001	.099	.723	.005
Bisexual Women	--	--	-2.676	.588	-.237**	-2.127	.567	-.188**	-1.132	.507	-.100*	-.831	.525	-.074
Lesbian Women	--	--	-.541	.669	-.041	-.857	.633	-.064	.176	.563	.013	.299	.561	.022
Age under 30	--	--	.888	.527	.083	.843	.492	.079	.004	.439	.000	-.067	.480	-.006
Coupled	--	--	.736	.499	.070	.557	.469	.053	.256	.417	.025	.246	.459	.024
Personal Religious Belief	1.93	.959	--	--	--	1.225	.238	.224**	.944	.210	.172**	.805	.226	.147**
Monogamous Lifestyle	3.59	1.670	--	--	--	.895	.143	.285**	.717	.127	.229**	.729	.125	.233**
Expected Effects of Marriage	2.56	1.753	--	--	--	--	--	--	.477	.115	.160**	.514	.115	.172**
Divorce Culture (sq. root)	2.85	.663	--	--	--	--	--	--	-3.247	.309	-.411**	-2.924	.315	-.370**
Queer Social Network	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.414	.399	-.039
Currently Christian	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.419	.482	.037
"Very liberal" politics	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-1.311	.419	-.125*
College Degree	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-1.142	.426	-.108*
Income (over \$75k)	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.423	.520	.037
Racial Identity	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.437	.559	-.030
Recruited online	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	.085	.444	.007
Midwest Region	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.554	.628	-.036
South Region	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.418	.492	-.036
Northeast Region	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	-.254	.558	-.019
Intercept			26.619	.480		20.966	.808		30.109	1.228		30.75	1.28	
Model Correlation Coefficients					$R^2=.048$			$R^2=.176$			$R^2=.367$			$R^2=.401$
					Adjusted $R^2=.038$			Adjusted $R^2=.163$			Adjusted $R^2=.354$			Adjusted $R^2=.375$
					R=.219			R=.419			R=.606			R=.633

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

and attitudes toward marriage. No such mediating relationship was found between the PMAS and the college education control variable.

The full regression model explains close to 40 percent of the variance in the PMAS (adjusted  $R^2=37.5$ ). Of the four independent predictors, religious belief, commitment to monogamy, and expectations for marriage are each positively and significantly associated with stronger, more traditional attitudes toward marriage as we know it. None of these predictors, however, has a stronger effect on attitudes than commitment to divorce culture, even when controlling for gender and sexual identity, age, relationship status, geographic location, education, income, Christian religious ideology, and possible recruitment biases.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### TOWARD A RED LETTER DAY

*Go to work and take your calls  
Hang the fruits of your labour on the walls  
Such precision and care  
What does it matter  
if there's no one here to share  
the flowers in the garden  
the wine  
the Waiting for Godot  
and so much modern time?  
All I want is what you want  
I'm always waiting for a red letter day*

— “Red Letter Day,” Pet Shop Boys, *Bilingual* (Tennant and Lowe 1996)

#### Assimilationist Ideology Among Non-Heterosexuals

The question central to this research was this: How much of the commitment to assimilationist ideology is explained by the values and beliefs captured in attitudinal measures of support for marriage? Non-heterosexuals whose attitudes toward marriage are more positive are gays and lesbians who are younger rather than older, who are relatively more religious as well as more committed to monogamy as a sexual lifestyle, who believe that marriage would improve their quality of life, and who take a relatively negative view of divorce. These individuals represent at once the assimilationist position in queer politics and

the marriage debates, and the reclamation of “normal” as an ideological and practical anchor of lesbian, gay and bisexual understanding of marriage and family life. *Quest for Quotidian* findings strongly suggest that the passions driving same-sex marriage movements around the country reflect neither a radical departure from core definitions of marriage, nor a rejection of traditional “family values” associated with matrimony, at least by gays and lesbians.

#### *Diversity and Divergence: Bisexuality*

Bisexuals share with gays and lesbians the experience of marginalization as members of a sexual minority, and at times are marginalized even within alternative sexual communities and groups (Califa 2005; Green 2003), or at least misunderstood (Rust 2002). Bisexuals in this survey reported low levels of integration in queer communities, suggesting that many bisexuals might feel somewhat excluded from what has come to be known as gay culture. On the other hand, bisexuals in the sample reported relatively high degrees of integration into civic life. The availability of marriage might play a small role in explaining these data. While bisexuals are often married and “passing” in the heterosexual world, they remain relatively invisible and thus potentially immunized against the public criticism and vitriol usually directed at homosexuals and same-sex couples. Without the protective veil of privacy that marriage—or potential marriage—provides to bisexuals and heterosexuals, gay and lesbian couples often have little choice but to expose their private personal and family lives to public scrutiny, and make themselves more vulnerable to prejudice and discrimination within their own families, neighborhoods, schools and the workplace.

While homosexuals and bisexuals—as defined in this research—may experience similar types of political or social marginalization, and may find themselves united against injustices based on their non-heterosexuality generally, the results of analyses of *Quest for Quotidian* data suggest it is a mistake for researchers to ignore differences between these two groups, and call for recognition that non-heterosexual populations are significantly diverse, not socially, ideologically, or behaviorally homogeneous. Lesbians and gay men people appear to hold a more traditional view of marriage than their bisexual counterparts, a pattern that

emerged in most analyses. For example, bisexuals were demonstrably less open about their sexuality and more likely to be closeted than were homosexuals. Commitment to monogamy in relationships was weaker among bisexuals than among homosexuals. Bisexual men and women were more likely to be legally married, but they were not as committed to monogamy as were homosexuals. PMAS scores for homosexual respondents were twice as likely to be captured in the upper quartile of the distribution as were scores from bisexual respondents. Inversely, the scores of bisexuals on commitment to divorce culture were twice as likely to be in the upper quartile of the distribution as were the scores of homosexuals, who viewed divorce more negatively, perhaps as a threat to the institution. Overall, the value orientations of lesbians and gays seem more similar to those of heterosexuals. The value orientations of bisexuals appear to clearly challenge the traditional definitions of marriage and the norms governing intimate relationships.

I do not draw attention to these trends in the data to lay responsibility for anti-gay bigotry at the feet of bisexuals, however, or to engage in any type of fingerpointing. Perhaps gays and lesbians feel they bear a sharper social stigma than bisexual men and women, and this may translate into divergent legal and political interests. No one identifies a specifically “bisexual agenda” as a threat to families, but gays and lesbians—including those who hold values more similar to heterosexuals’ than to bisexuals’—are collectively presumed by their critics and enemies to threaten the institution with their calls for inclusion. Bisexuals, on the other hand, are often in a position to critique marriage from the perspective of experienced participants, not hopeful applicants. Further, bisexuality challenges the “hetero-homo” binary as well as the “man-woman” gender dichotomy upon which historical constructions of both sexuality and traditional marriage rely, and do so in ways that “monosexuality”—an orientation toward only same-sex partners or only different-sex partners—does not (Carr 2006). This is evident in this research, in which bisexuality often distinguishes attitudes, values and behaviors that might be less favorable to marriage from those that are more favorable to marriage.



The results of the full regression model suggest that sexual orientation itself does not necessarily determine differences in attitudes toward marriage. When demographic characteristics and ideological preferences were controlled in Model 4, the identity marker variable “bisexual woman” ceased to be a significant predictor. Bisexual respondents were overwhelmingly women, while bisexual men accounted for fewer than one in ten respondents overall. Bisexual women outnumbered lesbian women almost two to one in the final sample. Bisexual women were generally younger women who often came to the survey from popular social networking websites, while bisexual men were generally older, often married men, many of whom came to the survey via blogs. Feminist thought and activism, as well as related intellectual and political movements, have undoubtedly influenced late modern understanding of sexuality and identity through structural and cultural critiques of the various mechanisms by which gendered systems of meaning have limited sexual expression, or sanctioned alternative sexual behaviors and ways of living. Given that *Quest for Quotidian* recorded relatively few responses from bisexual men, it is possible that bisexuality is a more accessible identity for women than for men, and especially for women coming of age in an arguably “post-feminist” era wherein women’s sexuality and bodies are less regulated than in the past. Perhaps bisexual women and men, who are rendered less visible in political and cultural movements as well as social life by monosexual discourse, are more likely than homosexual men and women to reject assimilation ideology because assimilation through marriage does not necessarily work. Bisexuals can already legally marry a partner, and many have taken advantage of the opportunity to do so. But marriage has not necessarily been a path to openness or acceptance for bisexuals in either the straight or gay world. Gay and lesbian people might gain social benefits and acknowledgment if they were allowed to legally marry, but bisexuals would likely see no significant changes to their own lives unless they adopted the norms and values of monosexuals, and specifically, norms of monogamy.

Instead, it would appear that many bisexuals in this sample have defined marriage and intimate relationships in ways that do not rely on sexual constraint, or monogamy, as a basis

for durability and permanence. One could argue that many bisexuals might choose to live in a society with no marriage at all, or one that features a kind of marriage that resembles the more permeable, more fluid relationships that most lesbians and gays are forced to accept in the absence of the right to marry. Based on the attitudinal data presented here, bisexual identity in practice could be described as more potentially subversive and revolutionary than gay identity in practice, and thus is necessarily less assimilationist and more liberationist. Of course, individuals predisposed to liberationist ideology might be more inclined to self-identify as bisexual, but it is just as reasonable to assume that bisexual individuals are inclined to embrace liberationist ideology, including values, beliefs and practices that may undermine marriage, but which they believe lead to a more radical transformation of marriage and family into more inclusive institutions. That bisexuals lean more toward liberationist ideology and homosexuals lean more toward assimilationist ideology means that lesbians and gays have very different political goals than those of bisexual men and women, and further warns against treating non-heterosexuals as a monolithic category in public discourse or social research.

Non-heterosexuals are, as a group, more politically and socially liberal, out of necessity or as a function of their systematic exclusion from various aspects of legal and social life. However, it appears that gays and lesbians in particular are less committed to extreme liberalism and radical social change. Glenn (1999) notes that the differences between “liberal” and “radical liberal” perspectives are determined by goal orientation: radical agendas generally include a revolutionary program aimed at destabilizing and replacing existing institutions and their cultural underpinnings. Radicals remain at the vanguard of progressive change, because they continue to question the present, and existing social structure and relationships. The uncompromisingly critical perspectives of radical liberal factions in the family wars have had relatively little influence on the ground in recent years, though, despite their ubiquitous presence in elite cultural and academic circles. Relegated to the margins, at least in the policy-making process, the radical liberal perspective alienates moderates

within the liberal camp even while offering the deepest and most dramatic criticisms of the structure of inequality in modern society. Too often, the pessimism expressed by radical liberal intellectuals toward the family as a system of gender, class and sexual oppression borders on stereotypical nihilism. Although I am painting with a broad brush, my data suggest that bisexuals tend to embrace a more radical stance toward marriage, while gays and lesbians appear to take a more moderate stance, one that suggests that solutions to problems of inequality in the present are at least partially found in the imagined stability of the past—namely, in the normative structure of monogamous legal marriage.

#### *Lifestyle Choices: Religion and Monogamy*

About sixty percent of respondents have left the faiths of their parents either for atheism or another faith, but about forty percent report that their religious beliefs have not changed. Regardless of whether their beliefs have changed, however, it is likely that religion has become more a private practice for lesbian, gay and bisexual believers, especially if their religions or faith communities maintain a public anti-gay stance or discourage participation by non-heterosexuals and their families in worship or other activities. After all, to many Christian churches and other religious groups in the United States, homosexuality—and especially gay rights—threatens to undermine families, governments and society; lesbians and gays themselves are depicted as nothing less than the living harbingers of the end of the evil world. It is difficult to imagine same-sex couples or single homosexual men and women would feel welcome in such environments. Nevertheless, my analyses revealed that stronger personal religious belief of any stripe predicts stronger attitudes toward traditional marriage, implying that non-heterosexuals readily find or create alternatives to institutional structures that reject or limit them. This finding reflects the queer sensibility that inspires innovation in personal and sexual relationships extends into other social practices valued by individuals, including religion. The social and personal value of religion *qua* religion in the lives of gays and lesbians has not diminished, but has been transferred or transformed, and ultimately retained, even if past religious affiliations have been discarded (Tan 2005). Religious

individuals, in this sample as in heterosexual populations, are more likely to have stronger pro-marriage attitudes, and thus are more likely to embrace assimilationist ideology with regard to same-sex marriage.

Slightly more than sixty percent of respondents who have a same-sex partner described their relationships as monogamous. As I have already established, personal religious belief is not correlated with commitment to a monogamous lifestyle, but religious conservatives might take heart in the finding from regression that relationship between monogamy and pro-marriage attitudes is significant and positive among non-heterosexuals. This finding must be interpreted with caution, however, since the measure actually captures the strength of commitment to monogamy, not whether individuals are practicing monogamy. Results indicate individuals whose relationships are more constrained by monogamy or limited non-monogamy are more likely to hold pro-marriage attitudes than those in relationships wherein the boundaries of appropriate extra-pair sexual behavior are less clearly defined and more permeable, or the rules governing sexual fidelity are more flexible. While no data currently in existence tells us whether the ability to marry will increase the number of strictly monogamous same-sex relationships among gays and lesbians, it is probably safe to say that a substantial number of partners in monogamous same-sex couples are likely to hold both traditional sexual norms and marriage in relatively high regard, and that these individuals would probably make up the lion's share of non-heterosexuals who would exercise the right to marry if it were available to them.

#### *Competing Cultures: Marriage and Divorce*

My research shows that positive attitudes toward marriage among non-heterosexuals are significantly correlated with a belief that marriage has improved or would improve their lives. The Positive Effects of Marriage scale (PEM) included six individual items, but there is reason to believe that some effects are more important than others. For example, on the individual items, gay and lesbian respondents indicated more frequently than bisexual respondents that marriage would improve their financial security, and increase their personal

happiness. These two items are significantly correlated with pro-marriage attitudes for gays and lesbians, but not for bisexuals. Relatively few respondents believe that marriage would improve their sex lives, their personal freedom, or their control over money. Most reported that these aspects of their lives and relationships would stay the same. Only a small minority indicated that marriage would make these matters worse. The sample is more or less divided on whether their lives as parents or potential parents might improve with the right to marry.

Although my hypotheses required me to use the PEM scale in its entirety, early exploratory analyses in which all six scale items were entered independently into the regression showed that only the expectation that marriage would increase personal happiness reached significance, but did not significantly change the predictive power of the model. Non-heterosexuals may indeed claim to have high hopes for marriage, but security and happiness seem to me to be rather modest expectations for anyone, much less members of a marginalized minority who are victims of overt and systematic discrimination. More research on what non-heterosexual people expect from legal marriage is necessary, but from my data, such expectations certainly do not appear to justify the claim that same-sex marriage would radically redefine marriage in the United States.

Non-heterosexuals' expectations for marriage do suggest that gays, lesbians and bisexuals are ambivalent about marriage. On one hand, marriage is a private relationship, subjectively defined by the emotional bonds between two individuals that promote personal satisfaction and happiness (see Stack and Eshleman 1998). On the other hand, marriage is a public commitment that requires individuals to subordinate their personal desires to the needs of the larger society in exchange for the rights and recognition that come with married status. This ambivalence is not unique to non-heterosexual populations, but has been a focal point in analyses of family problems for quite a while.

Based on analyses of *Quest for Quotidian* data, most non-heterosexuals are neither attacking marriage nor attempting to transform it into something it is not, but seeking integration into the family system through the one institution that is everywhere consistently

linked to a sense of security and an expectation of personal happiness. My data show that many same-sex couples clearly believe in the importance of marriage to individuals, children and the community, and tend to adhere to its more traditional normative structures. What is assumed to be an exclusively heterosexual culture of marriage *is already an integral part of queer life*, which requires interpretation of the struggle to expand the institution of marriage—to accommodate same-sex couples, their loved ones, and the relatively “normal” lives they already lead—a clear strategy of assimilation. “All I want is what you want,” indeed. Nevertheless, it is also clear that non-heterosexuals are no more immune to the effects of an increasingly powerful—and contradictory—divorce culture in American society than are heterosexuals.

Evident in this research is that values associated with the availability and desirability of divorce have a negative effect on pro-marriage attitudes. In other words, bisexuals, lesbians and gays are as ambivalent about divorce, overall, as everyone else in America. Even those with relatively strong attitudes toward traditional marriage often expressed equally strong attitudes that favor divorce in qualified circumstances. Echoing findings in other national surveys (Glenn 2005), findings from *Quest for Quotidian* data indicate that commitment to divorce culture is stronger among individuals with more education and more liberal politics.

The strength of pro-marriage values in this survey cannot be explained by sexual identity alone, nor by adherence to any supposedly radical queer political agenda. The value contradiction implied by the significant inverse relationship between pro-marriage attitudes and commitment divorce culture is evidence of American, not just non-heterosexual, ambivalence about marriage. It is this state of ambivalence, which crosses the boundaries of gender, sexual identity, and political divisions, that speaks most clearly of the advancement of individualism about which even the most moderate opponents of same-sex marriage keen incessantly, and sometimes disingenuously. Assigning blame to lesbian and gay couples for undermining marriage is a red herring, since it was the spread of no-fault divorce in the early 1970s that marked the retreat from marriage as a sacred public trust toward a more

personalized, flexible, and private relationship between adults as an apparently unstoppable historical trend.

Conservative and centrist family scholars and advocates are alarmed about the possibility that more people, specifically gay people, might participate in marriage, even though the real problem with marriage in the United States remains the endorsement of divorce as an alternative to marriage for individuals who find neither security nor happiness in matrimony. Even if same-sex marriage is realized nationwide within the next decade or two, family scholars and advocates will likely still be dealing with the possible negative consequences of divorce for families and children. It might even be the case that the expansion of marriage rights to gay and lesbian couples will refocus the energies of those concerned about marriage on the persistent social problems associated with divorce, or on the refinement of state policies concerning marital dissolution, child custody and support. In the meantime, divorce continues to be the singular issue about which Americans, gay and straight and otherwise, are divided when it comes to expressing support for an inclusive culture of marriage in the United States.

#### Queer Assimilation as a Function of Radical Familism

*Quest for Quotidian* is a search for common ground as well as an assessment of the possibility of a common social destiny for heterosexuals and non-heterosexuals alike. The current dynamic, fluid social context wherein so many Americans appear willing to accept rather than stigmatize sexual difference is indicative of social movement toward assimilation of lesbians and gays into more, not fewer, social institutions. Results presented here show that community integration variables exert relatively little influence on marriage attitudes among non-heterosexuals. Given the rates of both perceptions of openness about sexual identity and disclosure of sexual identity to others, the “closet” seems to be less a public space and more a personal problem in this sample. That stronger support for traditional values associated with marriage is not significantly dependent upon whether someone is

more or less active in either the straight or gay community may suggest a relatively high degree of presumptive integration at the levels of community, neighborhoods and families. If community integration variables predict neither assimilationist nor liberationist ideological commitments, then perhaps non-heterosexuals are so visibly a part of everyday social life that it might be time to reassess the assumption that a “queer culture,” separate and distinct from that of the heterosexual majority, is a major force in the lives and politics of lesbian and gay people. Though they continue to experience systematic discrimination, non-heterosexuals are here, queer, and apparently most people are used to it.

Decades of differential and unequal treatment of gays and lesbians have certainly resulted in different interpretive frames for family life and politics, but that does not mean that having an alternative sexual identity requires that every individual must consistently and fundamentally challenge every existing social form or institution. For example, I have shown that non-heterosexual people live in towns and cities across the United States, working in a range of more or less traditional occupations. Some make a point of frequenting gay-owned or queer-friendly businesses, and some do not. Some want to get married sometime in the future, and some do not. A number are already in monogamous, marriage-like relationships, and within such relationships, many are raising children. Like their heterosexual neighbors and friends, some participate more in their communities, some less. In other words, non-heterosexuals already live remarkably “normal” lives, even without having the right to marry. While some in the sample may think that marriage would change non-heterosexual existence from fabulously queer to unexceptionally mundane, a number of other respondents might believe marriage would finally transform uneasy tolerance into full acceptance of lesbians, gays and their families in the United States. And why would they not?

As I wrote in Chapter One, the conservative case for same sex marriage relies on an assumption of a demonstrated commitment to traditional US familism. It seems clear from my data that individuals most likely to want to marry, or who want to see marriage made available to same-sex couples are those with such a commitment. The pro-family movement



has been largely successful in selling the American people—including gays and lesbians—on the importance of family and marriage. They have been so successful that their activities and rhetoric over the past 30 years may have had a sustained positive effect on non-heterosexuals who have grown into adulthood or into relationships during these past decades. The pro-marriage value orientation described in these data come from somewhere.

Socialization of children is a primary function of the family in all societies, and the process undeniably includes socialization of children into gender roles that are intimately intertwined with notions of “appropriate” sexual desires and activities. Even so, heterosexual parents are rarely held accountable for the adult sexual identities of their children. Given the heteronormative, patriarchal structure of American society, we cannot expect children of heterosexual couples who grow up to express same-sex attraction to have been socialized to do so—it is highly unlikely that parents would know how to socialize children into non-heterosexual lifestyles or values, even if they wanted to do so. Rather, if after coming out, lesbian and gay individuals are assumed to be “sick” or “perverted,” the assumption is that their socialization had no effect on them at all, or was negated in some way. This is an erroneous assumption.

It is more likely that socialization “worked” exactly as it was supposed to work. Parents can and do model more generic values, attitudes, practices and behaviors that lead their children to an understanding of how sexual desire should be expressed within intimate relationships and regulated by the community within the broader cultural context of American life, even when those children may ultimately recognize their non-heterosexual identity. In this context, it is relatively easy to see why monogamy is so desirable, why religious belief of some sort is so important, why higher expectations for marriage are so influential, and why negative views of divorce are so prevalent among those *Quest for Quotidian* respondents whose attitudes toward marriage reflect assimilationist ideology. Such attitudes do not signal a subversive deviance, but a tendency to conform to the social expectations governing sexual behavior and relationships passed along from their parents

and adapted to the alternative social and intimate relationships in which non-heterosexuals, and especially lesbians and gays, find themselves as adults. This tendency suggests that assimilation is more than a personal or political decision, but an intergenerational process that could very well be driven by a larger cultural narrative or political movement.

The *Quest for Quotidian* survey results show only that the demand for same-sex marriage may be related to the increased visibility of non-heterosexuals in the United States. Certainly as the stigma attached to homosexuality and bisexuality recedes, non-heterosexual individuals and couples will be more likely to protest anti-gay discrimination in family policy openly and publicly, but my results only indirectly reveal why assimilation through marriage is gaining ground as the preferred strategy for addressing social inequality among non-heterosexuals.

I believe that the movement toward assimilation and same-sex-inclusive marriage is likely a consequence of the successful pro-family activism of social conservatives and right-leaning politicians since the 1980s. That same-sex marriage was a definitive wedge issue in the 2004 presidential election (Lewis 2005) is one indication of this success, as is the passage of every single state-level constitutional amendment that defines marriage as a right available only to heterosexual couples. Since same-sex marriage became a possibility in Hawaii's *Baehr v. Lewin* case in 1993, anti-gay forces have busily and successfully "protected" marriage by elevating it in the public consciousness as the height of achievement in personal relationships. Today, marriage is everywhere touted by conservatives and anti-gay activists as the most revered, most respected and most desirable type of personal relationship, and the only one *truly* deserving of recognition by the state, despite the separate-but-equal compromises known as civil unions or registered domestic partnerships. Marriage as ideology is more powerful and compelling than it was thirty years ago. Marital status—a mark of maturity, respect and responsibility; a license to have children, and parent those children without undue criticism; and a legitimate claim to a bundle of family-affirming social and government benefits—remains a privilege reserved for heterosexuals largely because of the effectiveness with which

pro-marriage and pro-family forces have dominated discussion of marriage and family since the Reagan years.

Most of the respondents in my survey have grown up inundated with pro-family and pro-marriage messages. They have lived through the revival of late 20th century familism in the United States, and were reared in families by parents who were likely unable to avoid being influenced by the “family values” crowd. Over the span of just over two decades, it is easily conceivable that the barrage of messages fired to and fro in the culture wars has convinced Americans—conservatives, liberals, straights and gays—that marriage is something worth fighting for. The movement toward assimilation, then, should come as no surprise, and neither should the sustained activism on the part of lesbians and gays to secure the right to marry. As successful anti-gay efforts to “protect” marriage have intensified, marriage has come to be more highly valued, a powerful symbol of equality. The more valuable marriage and marital status are, the more intense will be the demand for marriage from those who are excluded from it, in this and future generations. Future research should explore the possibility that the more successfully social conservatives, religious fundamentalists and anti-gay activists promote marriage or marital status as the quintessential key to happiness, satisfaction, social stability and economic prosperity, the more strongly will gays and lesbians fight to participate equally in the institution, irrespective of any negative outcomes of legislative processes, ballot initiatives or court cases. By making marriage personally and politically irresistible, opponents of same-sex marriage may have guaranteed an ongoing culture war that can only end with their own failure.

#### Limitations and Directions for Further Research

In the meantime, policies affecting lesbians, gays and their children and families will continue to be implemented either (1) in the absence of knowledge about the population, or (2) in willful contradiction to most research findings available about the population, ostensibly because the samples on which these studies are based are assumed to be flawed.

The *Quest for Quotidian* sample is, unfortunately, not immune to this criticism. The most significant barriers to producing research on non-heterosexual individuals involve sampling. In this study, I was forced to use a form of non-random, “snowball” sampling to generate a sample of sufficient size and scope to perform my analyses. This is not an unusual strategy for researchers conducting online or traditional surveys of non-heterosexual populations, but the sampling method does have its drawbacks.

Findings from studies that rely on chain-referral or snowball sampling methods are relatively easy to dismiss, primarily because non-random sampling techniques usually prohibit any meaningful estimates of parameters in the population. Individuals, groups and politicians opposed to extending rights to gays and lesbians are quick to capitalize on the flawed (but necessary) sampling design to discredit findings that might challenge the validity of conservative arguments against gay rights, including marital and parental rights (Lerner and Nagai 2000). Given that gay and lesbian families are neither consistently identified in large surveys, nor defined as a group in any way meaningful to the construction of a sampling frame, the problem of non-random sampling is self-perpetuating in this population.

Future researchers might solve the problem of the absence of a sampling frame, or list of gays, lesbians and other non-heterosexuals from which a random sample can be drawn by applying the techniques described by Heckathorn (1997, 2002, 2008) and Salganik and Heckathorn (2004) as “Respondent-Driven Sampling” (RDS) to obtain a sample of gays and lesbians whose relationships to one another constitute a social network from which estimates of population parameters might be reliably made. RDS is a methodological reconceptualization of traditional chain-referral sampling (or “snowball sampling,” see Goodman 1961), an approach often used to reach hidden or otherwise hard to reach populations. RDS addresses a major problem inherent to studies that rely on traditional chain-referral sampling, that is, the inability of researchers to generalize their findings from samples of convenience to the study population. While RDS cannot completely close the gap between the generalizability of findings derived from random samples and those derived from non-random samples,

Heckathorn's technique does offer researchers studying marginalized or marked populations a systematic sampling approach and interpretive frame that improves upon traditional methods:

The key idea behind the estimation procedures is that the estimates do not come from the sample proportions. Rather, the sample is used to make estimates about the network connecting the population. Then, using information about this network, we can derive the population proportion in different groups. By not attempting to estimate directly from the sample to the population, we avoid many of the well-known problems with chain-referral samples. (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004:201)

Like the use of non-random sampling methods, the use of online data collection methods is largely dictated by the ability to recruit a large, geographically and demographically diverse number of individual members of a hidden population that might only be reachable via some form of chain-referral sampling method. Taken together, non-random sampling and online recruitment and data collection strategies are methodological responses to two biases that influence the study of non-heterosexual populations in the United States.

The first is a structural bias that renders research on gay and lesbian families highly problematic. Because queer individuals and families in the general population are uncounted and have historically been largely invisible to demographers and researchers, there exists no reliable sampling frame from which to draw a random sample of homosexuals or their households. Indeed, if estimates of the proportion of homosexuals in the population are accurate—census data suggests that as few as three percent of US households are same-sex households, and other researchers have published similar estimates (Laumann, et al. 1994)—attempting to obtain a random sample of homosexuals through traditional means is both prohibitively expensive and unreasonably time-consuming. Some researchers have been able to deduce samples of non-heterosexuals from existing datasets from large random sample

surveys, but they must still rely on a set of assumptions about respondents who have not necessarily identified themselves as gay or lesbian (Black, et al. 2000).

The structural bias described here feeds a second bias, one against acknowledging that homosexual or non-heterosexual people—along with their friends, partners and children—live their lives in real families, in real communities, but in most cases without any real rights or protections for themselves and those they love. Without interrogating this population using methods and tools that are defensible against attacks on the validity and generalizability of findings—there can be no real discussion of the possible social effects of allowing (or prohibiting) same-sex marriage.

In the end, until some mechanism by which public and legal recognition of the legitimate existence of homosexuals and same-sex couples is established, studies of this population will be less than ideal. Nevertheless, the *Quest for Quotidian* survey represents a wide cross-section of at least a portion of non-heterosexuals in America, and certainly demonstrates the potential of online attitude surveys to generate a significant sample in a relatively short time. If sampling methods were improved; that is, if techniques like Respondent-Driven Sampling are developed further for use in online survey sampling and network analysis, findings from surveys such as this one would be markedly improved, and potentially more influential in the policy-making process and on public opinion.

### The Future of Marriage

In the United States in the early years of the 21st century, lesbian women and gay men, as well as bisexual individuals, were more likely to be treated like “normal” human beings than they were in the decades before—and turbulent years after—the Stonewall Riots announced the imminent arrival of queer public consciousness in the early 1970s. Some non-heterosexual people could at least *imagine* being in romantic relationships that followed a more or less “traditional” trajectory—from dating, to meeting the parents, to starting a family—without fear of ridicule, rejection, condemnation or isolation from the families and

kin-based support systems that wrap individuals into the comforting, normalizing routines of everyday life. What most could not expect, even under the best of circumstances, was a proposal, an engagement, or a wedding.

It is these expectations that have changed so dramatically since the 1970s. If US society continues to relax restrictions—both formal and informal—on those who fall outside heteronormative categories of existence, then the historically rigid line between what is possible for heterosexuals and what is possible for homosexuals will gradually fade, or become more ambiguous. It is this state of ambiguity and flux that represents political opportunity to open and expand marriage as an institution to individuals who have long been excluded from it, including those who have believed in it and upheld its normative principles through most of their lives.

Same-sex couples face uncertain outcomes in the legal and legislative battlefields of America's culture war, but the efforts of activists and everyday citizens to secure the right to marry hardly seem hopeless. The findings of the research presented here suggest many gays and lesbians are adopting strategies in intimate relationships that are more similar than different to the socially-approved strategies that too many heterosexuals believe are theirs alone. Gays, lesbians and bisexuals with an assimilationist orientation appear to share a common language with heterosexuals where the family is concerned, a language that articulates a set of core values defining marriage—love, monogamy, commitment, children, faith, community, and fear of divorce. Above all, the attitudinal orientations of gays and lesbians appear to undergird more or less traditional ways of forming relationships, building families, and participating in civil and political life. Empirical evidence is mounting that assimilation and full integration into the family system will not be achieved sometime in the future, but rather that it is already well underway, and that equality—in marriage, in families, and in society—is within reach for non-heterosexuals who believe that the quest for a quotidian existence, a “normal” life, ends with saying “I do.”

## REFERENCES

- Adam, Barry D. 2004. "Care, Intimacy and Same-Sex Partnership in the 21st Century." *Current Sociology* 52(2):265–279.
- Adam, Barry D. 2006. "Relationship Innovation in Male Couples." *Sexualities* 9(1):5-26.
- Aldrich, Robert. 2004. "Homosexuality and the City: An Historical Overview." *Urban Studies* 41(9): 1719–1737.
- Allen, Katherine R. and David H. Demo. 1995. "The Families of Lesbians and Gay Men: A New Frontier in Family Research." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57:PGS.
- Altheide, David. 2000. *Creating Fear: News and the Construction of Crisis*. Piscataway, NJ: Aldine Transaction.
- Anderson, Ryan T. 2006. "Beyond Gay Marriage: The stated goal of these prominent gay activists is no longer merely the freedom to live as they want." *The Weekly Standard*. August 17, 2006. Retrieved August 17, 2006 (<http://www.weeklystandard.com/Content/Public/Articles/000/000/012/591cxhia.asp?pg=2>).
- Armstrong, Karen. 2001. *The Battle for God*. New York: Random House.
- Associated Press. "Calif. AG urges court to void gay marriage ban, Brown had said he would defend against attempts to overturn Proposition 8." MSNBC.com. December 19, 2008. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/28320862/>) accessed December 19, 2008).
- Avery, Alison, Justin Chase, Linda Johansson, Samantha Litvak, Darrel Montero and Michael Wydra. 2007. "America's Changing Attitudes Toward Homosexuality, Civil Unions, and Same-Gender Marriage, 1977-2004." *Social Work* 52(1): 71-79.
- Badgett, M. V. Lee. 1998. *Income Inflation: The myth of affluence among gay, lesbian and bisexual Americans*. Amherst, MA: Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, 23.



- Badgett, M. V. Lee. 1995. "The Wage Effects of Sexual Orientation Discrimination." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 48(4):726-739.
- Baehr v. Lewin*. 74 Haw. 530 (1993).
- Baker v. Vermont*, 744 A.2d 864 (1999).
- Barbeite, Francisco G., and Elizabeth M. Weiss. 2004. "Computer self-efficacy and anxiety scales for an Internet sample: testing measurement equivalence of existing measures and development of new scales." *Computers in Human Behavior* 20(1):1-15.
- Barclay, Scott, and Shauna Fisher. 2003. "The States and the Differing Impetus for Divergent Paths on Same-Sex Marriage, 1990-2001." *The Policy Studies Journal* 31(3): 331-352.
- Bawer, Bruce. 1993. *A Place at the Table: The Gay Individual in American Society*. New York: Touchstone.
- Bellah, Robert N., Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, and Ann Swidler. 1996. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Benokraitis, Nijole V. 1999. "How Family Wars Affect Us: Four Models of Family Change and Their Consequences." Pp. 14-24 in *Feuds about Families: Conservative, Centrist, Liberal, and Feminist Perspectives*, edited by N. V. Benokraitis.
- Berbrier, Mitch. 2004. "Assimilationism and Pluralism as Cultural Tools." *Sociological Forum* 19(1): 29-61.
- Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner. 1998. "Sex in Public." *Critical Inquiry* 24: 547-565.
- Bernstein, Mary. 2002. "Identities and Politics: Toward a Historical Understanding of the Lesbian and Gay Movement." *Social Science History* 26(3): 531-581.
- Besharov, Douglas J. and Timothy S. Sullivan. 1996. "Welfare reform and marriage." *The Public Interest*, Fall: 81-96.
- Black, Dan, Gary Gates, Seth Sanders, and Lowell Taylor. 2000. "Demographics of the gay and lesbian population in the United States: Evidence from available systematic data sources." *Demography* 37(2): 139-154.

- Blankenhorn, David. 1996. *Fatherless America: Confronting Our Most Urgent Social Problem*. New York: Basic Books.
- . 2007. *The Future of Marriage*. New York: Encounter Books.
- Blasius, Mark. 1992. "An Ethos of Gay and Lesbian Existence." *Political Theory* 20(4): 642-671.
- Booth, Alan, David Johnson, and John N. Edwards. 1983. "Measuring Marital Instability." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 45(2): 387-395.
- Bornstein, Kate. 1994. *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women and the Rest of Us*. New York: Routledge.
- Boswell, John. 1994. *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*. New York: Random House.
- Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 U.S. 186 (1986).
- Bowman, Cynthia Grant. 2004. "Legal Treatment of Cohabitation in the United States." *Law & Policy* 26(1): 119-151.
- Brewer, Paul R., and Clyde Wilcox. 2005. "The Polls—Trends: Same-Sex Marriage and Civil Unions." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 69(4): 599-616.
- Brumbaugh, Stacey M., Laura A. Sanchez, Steven L. Nock, and James D. Wright. 2008. "Attitudes Toward Gay Marriage in States Undergoing Marriage Law Transformation." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70: 245-259.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Cahill, Sean. 2005. "Welfare Moms and the Two Grooms: The Concurrent Promotion and Restriction of Marriage in US Public Policy." *Sexualities* 8(2): 169-187.
- Califa, Patrick. 2005. "Life Among the Monosexuals." *Journal of Bisexuality* 5(2/3): 139-148.
- Cameron, Jan, and Katrina Hargreaves. 2005. "Managing family secrets: same-sex relationships." *New Zealand Sociology* 20(1): 102-122.
- Carpenter, Christopher S. 2005. "Self-Reported Sexual Orientation and Earning: Evidence From California." *Industrial and Labor Relations Review* 58(2): 258-273.

- Carr, C. Lynn. 2006. "Bisexuality as a Category in Social Research: Lessons from Women's Gendered Narratives." *Journal of Bisexuality* 6(4): 27-46.
- Carrington, Christopher. 1999. *No place like home: Relationships and family life among lesbians and gay men*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Cell, John W. 1982. *The Highest Stage of White Supremacy: The Origins of Segregation in South Africa and the American South*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Chauncey, George. 1995. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books.
- Chauncey, George. 2004. *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate Over Gay Equality*. New York: Basic Books.
- Cherlin, Andrew. 2004. "The Deinstitutionalization of American Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 66: 848-861.
- Coontz, Stephanie. 1992. *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books.
- Coulton, C., J. Korbin, and M. Su. 1996. "Measuring Neighborhood Context for Youth Children in an Urban Area." *American Journal of Community Psychology* 24(1): 5-32.
- Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), 28 USC 1738Ca. (1996).
- Demo, David H., and Katherine R. Allen. 1996. "Diversity Within Lesbian and Gay Families: Challenges and Implications for Family Theory and Research." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 13(3): 415-434.
- Derlega, Valerian and Alan L. Chaikin. 1977. "Privacy and self-disclosure in social relationships." *Journal of Social Issues*. 33:102-115.
- Doms, Kurt. 2004. "Cultural Emergence, Legal Polycentricity and Same-sex Couples' Right to Marry." *Journal of Gender Studies* 13(3): 271-274.
- Dozier, Raine. 2005. "Beards, breasts, and bodies: doing sex in a gendered world." *Gender & Society* 19(1): 297-217.
- Duberman, Martin. 1994. *Stonewall*. New York: Plume.

- Egan, Patrick J., and Kenneth Sherrill. 2005. "Marriage and the Shifting Priorities of a New Generation of Lesbians and Gays." *Political Science and Politics* 38(2): 229-232.
- Escoffier, Jeffrey. 1998. *American Homo: Community and Perversity*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Eskridge, William N. Jr. 1993. "A History of Same-Sex Marriage." *Virginia Law Review* 79(7): 1419-1513.
- Ettelbrick, Paula L. 1992. "Since when is marriage a path to liberation?" Pp. 20-26 in *Lesbian and Gay Marriage: Private Commitments, Public Ceremonies*, edited by Suzanne Sherman. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Faiola, Anthony. 2007. "Civil Union Laws Don't Ensure Benefits, Same-Sex N.J. Couples Find That Employers Can Get Around New Rules." *Washington Post*, June 30, 2007. Retrieved July 1, 2007 ([http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/29/AR2007062902201\\_pf.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/29/AR2007062902201_pf.html)).
- Fetner, Tina. 2001. "Working Anita Bryant: The Impact of Christian Anti-Gay Activism on Lesbian and Gay Movement Claims." *Social Problems* 48(3): 411-428.
- Flouri, Eirini, and Ann Buchanan. 2001. "What Predicts Traditional Attitudes Toward Marriage?" *Children & Society* 15: 263-271.
- Gallagher, Maggie and Joshua K. Baker. 2006. "Demand for Same-Sex Marriage: Evidence from the United States, Canada, and Europe." iMapp Policy Brief, April 26, 2006.
- Glenn, Norval D. 1999. "Who's Who in the Family Wars: A Characterization of the Major Ideological Factions." Pp. 2-13 in *Fends about Families: Conservative, Centrist, Liberal, and Feminist Perspectives*, edited by N. V. Benokraitis.
- . 2001. "Social science findings and the 'family wars'." *Society* 38(4): 13-19.
- . 2004. "The Stuggle for Same-Sex Marriage." *Society*. 41(6): 25-28.
- . 2005. *With This Ring: A National Survey on Marriage in America*. Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative.

- Glenn, Norval D. and Thomas Sylvester. 2006. *The Denial: Downplaying the Consequences of Family Structure for Children*. New York: Institute for American Values.
- . 2005. *The Shift: Scholarly arguments about family structure, 1977-2002*. New York: Institute for American Values.
- Goode, Erich and Nachman Ben-Yehuda. 1994. *Moral Panics: The Social Construction of Deviance*. Oxford UK: Blackwell.
- Goodridge v. Department of Health*, 798 N.E.2d 941 (2003).
- Gordon, Liahna E. 2006. "Bringing the U-Haul: Embracing and Resisting Sexual Stereotypes in a Lesbian Community." *Sexualities* 9(2): 171-192.
- Gosling, Samuel D., Simine Vazire, Sanjay Srivastava, and Oliver P. John. 2004. "Should We Trust Web-Based Studies? A Comparative Analysis of Six Preconceptions About Internet Questionnaires." *American Psychologist* 59(2): 93-104.
- Goss, Robert E. 1997. "Queering procreative privilege: coming out as families." Pp. 3-20 in *Our Families, Our Values: Snapshots of Queer Kinship*, edited by R. E. Goss and A. S. Strongheart. Binghampton, JN: Harrington Park Press.
- Granello, Darcy Haag, and Joe E. Wheaton. 2004. "Online Data Collection: Strategies for Research." *Journal of Counseling & Development* 82: 387-393.
- Green, Adam Isaiah. 2002. "Gay but not queer: Toward a post-queer study of sexuality." *Theory and Society* 31: 521-545.
- Green, Jamison. 2003. "Centering: An Alternative Perspective." *Journal of Bisexuality* 3(3/4): 277-285.
- Green, Samuel B. 1991. "How Many Subjects Does It Take to Do a Regression Analysis?" *Multivariate Behavioral Research* 26(3): 499-510.
- Hawkins, Alan J., Steven L. Nock, Julia C. Wilson, Laura Sanchez and James Wright. 2002. "Attitudes about covenant marriage and divorce: Policy implications from a three-state comparison." *Family Relations* 51: 166-175.

- Heckathorn, Douglas D. 2002. "Respondent-Driven Sampling II: Deriving Valid Population Estimates from Chain-Referral Samples of Hidden Populations." *Social Problems* 49(1): 11-34.
- Herek, Gregory M., Jeanine C. Cogan, J. Roy Gillis and Eric K. Glunt. 1997. "Correlates of Internalized Homophobia in a Community Sample of Lesbians and Gay Men." *Journal of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association* 2: 17-25.
- Herzog, Dagmar. 2008. *Sex in Crisis: The New Sexual Revolution and the Future of American Politics*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hicks, Stephen. 2005. "Is Gay Parenting Bad for Kids? Responding to the 'Very Idea of Difference' in Research on Lesbian and Gay Parents." *Sexualities* 8(2): 153-168.
- Higgins, Daryl J. 2004. "Differences Between Previously Married and Never Married 'Gay' Men: Family Background, Childhood Experiences and Current Attitudes." *Journal of Homosexuality* 48(1): 19-41.
- . 2002. "Gay Men from Heterosexual Marriages: Attitudes, Behaviors, Childhood Experiences, and Reasons for Marriage." *Journal of Homosexuality* 42(4): 15-34.
- Hohengarten, William H. 1994. "Same-Sex Marriage and the Right to Privacy." *The Yale Law Journal* 103(6): 1495-1531.
- Howard-Hassmann, Rhoda E. 2001. "Gay Rights and the Right to a Family: Conflicts between Liberal and Illiberal Belief Systems." *Human Rights Quarterly* 23(1): 73-95.
- Humphreys, Laud. 1975. *Tearoom trade: Impersonal sex in public places*. New York: Aldine.
- Johnson, Carol. 2002. "Heteronormative Citizenship and the Politics of Passing." *Sexualities* 5(3): 317-336.
- Johnson, Christine, et al. 2001. *Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 Baseline Statewide Survey on Marriage and Divorce*. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Marriage Initiative, 2001.
- Johnson, Paul. 2004. "Haunting Heterosexuality: The Homo/Het Binary and Intimate Love." *Sexualities* 7(2): 183-200.

- Jordan, Karen M., and Robert H. Deluty. 1998. "Coming out for lesbian women: Its relation to anxiety, positive affectivity, self-esteem, and social support." *Journal of Homosexuality* 35(2):41-63.
- Kaiser, Charles. 1997. *The Gay Metropolis: The Landmark History of Gay Life in America*. Grove Press.
- Kanazawa, Satoshi, and Mary C. Still. 1999. "Why Monogamy." *Social Forces* 78(1): 25-51.
- Karney, Benjamin R. 2003. *2003 Baseline Survey of Family Experiences and Attitudes in Florida*. Gainesville, FL: Florida University Press.
- Knickerbocker, Brad. 2006. "Crackdown on polygamy group: Warren Jeffs, leader of the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints, has been charged with multiple crimes." *Christian Science Monitor*, May 9, 2006. Retrieved March 12, 2009 (<http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/0509/p02s01-ussc.html>).
- Kurdek, Lawrence A. 1998. "Relationship Outcomes and their Predictors: Longitudinal Evidence from Heterosexual Married, Gay Cohabiting, and Lesbian Cohabiting Couples." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60: 553-568.
- . 2004. "Are Gay and Lesbian Cohabiting Couples Really Different From Heterosexual Married Couples?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66:880-900.
- . 2005. "What Do We Know About Gay and Lesbian Couples?" *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(5): 251-254.
- . 2006. "Differences Between Partners From Heterosexual, Gay, Lesbian and Cohabiting Couples." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 68: 509-528.
- Lambert, Serena. 2005. "Gay and Lesbian Families: What We Know and Where to Go From Here." *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families* 13(1): 43-51.
- Lannutti, Pamela J. 2005. "For better or worse: Exploring the meanings of same-sex marriage within the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 22(1): 5-18.

- LaSala, Michael C. "Gay Male Couples: The Importance of Coming Out and Being Out to Parents." *Journal of Homosexuality* 39(2) 2000): 47-71.
- Laumann, E. O., G. H. Gagnon, R. T. Michael, and S. Michaels. *The social organization of sexuality: Sexual practices in the United States*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1994.
- Lawrence and Garner v. Texas*. 539 U.S. 558 (2003).
- Lehmiller, Justin J., and Christopher R. Agnew. "Marginalized Relationships: The Impact of Social Disapproval on Romantic Relationship Commitment." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 32(1) 2006): 40-51.
- Lehr, Valerie. *Queer Family Values: Debunking the Myth of the Nuclear Family*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999.
- Lerner, Robert, and Althea K. Nagai. "Out of Nothing Comes Nothing: Homosexual and Heterosexual Marriage Not Shown to be Equivalent for Raising Children." Paper presented at the Revitalizing the Institution of Marriage for the 21st Century Conference. Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 2000.
- Lewin, Ellen. 1998. *Recognizing Ourselves: Ceremonies of Lesbian and Gay Commitment*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lewis, Gregory B. 2005. "Same-Sex Marriage and the 2004 Presidential Election." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 38(2): 195-199.
- Lewis, Gregory B., and Jonathan L. Edelson. 2000. "DOMA and ENDA: Congress Votes on Gay Rights." Pp. 193-216 in *The Politics of Gay Rights*, edited by Craig A. Rimmerman, Clyde Wilcox and Kenneth D. Wald. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Liu, Frederick, and Stephen Macedo. 2005. "The Federal Marriage Amendment and the Strange Evolution of the Conservative Case against Gay Marriage." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 38(2): 211-215.
- Loftus, Jeni. 2001. "America's Liberalization in Attitudes toward Homosexuality, 1973 to 1998." *American Sociological Review* 66: 762-782.
- Lorber, Judith. 1994. *Paradoxes of Gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994.



- Los Angeles Family and Neighborhood Survey (LA FANS). 2000. "Primary Caregiver Survey."
- Lum, Matt. "Protestors Ultimately Want Death for Homosexuals." *Gay and Lesbian Archives of the Pacific Northwest*. March 2-8, 2001. Retrieved December 28, 2008 (<http://www.glapn.org/sodomylaws/usa/texas/txnews64.htm>).
- Martell, Christopher R., and Stacey E. Prince. "Treating Infidelity in Same-Sex Couples." *JCLP/In Session* 61(11): 1429-1438.
- Mayo, Cris. 2006. "Pushing the Limits of Liberalism: Queerness, Children, and the Future." *Educational Theory* 56(4): 469-487.
- McLanahan, Sara, Irwin Garfinkel, Nancy Reichman, Julien Teitler, Marcia Carlson, and Christina Norland Audigier. 2003. *The Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Baseline National Report*. Princeton, NJ: Center for Research on Child Wellbeing.
- Mohr, Richard. "Gay Studies as Moral Vision." *Educational Theory* 39(2):121-132.
- Morgan, David. 1996. *Family Connections*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Nardi, Peter M. 1997. "Friends, lovers, and families: the impact of AIDS on gay and lesbian relationships." In *In changing times: Gay men and lesbians encounter HIV/AIDS*, edited by M. P. Levine, Peter M. Nardi and J. H. Gagnon, 55-82. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- . 1999. *Gay Men's Friendships: Invincible Communities*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Milligan, Sharon, Michelle Nario-Redmond and Claudia Coulton. 2006. *The 1995-1996 Cleveland Community-Building Initiative Baseline Progress Report: Village Council Formation, Asset Appraisal, Agenda Formation, and Action Projects*. Cleveland, OH: Center on Urban Poverty and Community Development, Case Western Reserve University.
- Newman, Stephen A. 2006/2007. "Political Advocacy on the Supreme Court: The Damaging Rhetoric of Antonin Scalia." *New York Law School Law Review* 51(4): 907-926.

- Nock, Steven L. 1995. "Commitment and Dependency in Marriage." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 57(2): 503-514.
- . 2005. "Marriage as a Public Issue." *The Future of Children* 15(2): 13-32.
- Olson, Laura R., Wendy Cadge, and James T. Harrison. 2006. "Religion and Public Opinion about Same-Sex Marriage." *Social Science Quarterly* 87(2): 340-360.
- Parker, Richard, Dianne di Mauro, Beth Filiano, Jonathan Garcia, Miguel Munoz-Laboy, and Robert Sember. 2004. "Global Transformations and Intimate Relations in the 21st Century: Social Science Research on Sexuality and the Emergence of Sexual Health and Sexual Rights Frameworks." *Annual Review of Sex Research*, 2004: 362-398.
- Patterson, C. J. "Family relationships of lesbians and gay men." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 62: 1052-1069.
- Pearlin, L., M. Lieberman, Elizabeth Menaghan, and J. Mullan. 1981. "The stress process." *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 22:337-356.
- Peplau, L.A., and K.P. Beals. 2004. "The family lives of lesbians and gay men." Pp 233-248 in *Handbook of family communication*, edited by A. L. Vangelisti. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Perkins, Douglas D., David M. Chavis, Paul Florin, Richard C. Rich and Abraham Wandersman. 1985. "Blocking crime with block associations." *Citizens Participation* 6(3): 18-9.
- Pew Research Center. 1997. Greater Philadelphia Social Trust Survey.
- Pope, Carole. 2001. "West End Boys." *The Advocate* 842: 46-49.
- Putnam, Robert. 2001. *Bowling Alone : The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Rauch, Jonathan. 2004. *Gay marriage: Why it is good for gays, good for straights, and good for America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Reis, Harry T. and Phillip Shaver. 1988. "Intimacy as an interpersonal process." Pp. 367-389 in *Handbook of personal relationships* edited by S. Duck. Chichester, England: Wiley.
- Rich, Adrienne. 1983. *Compulsory heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. New York: Antelope.

- Riggle, Ellen D. B., Sharon S. Rostosky, and C. Stuart Reedy. 2005. "Online Surveys for BGLT Research: Issues and Techniques." *Journal of Homosexuality* 49(2):1-21.
- Risman, Barbara, and Pepper Schwartz. 1988. "Sociological Research on Male and Female Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 14: 125-147.
- Robson, Colin. 2002. *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers*. 2nd. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.
- Rosenberg, Morris. 1965. *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rosenfeld, Michael J. 2007. *The Age of Independence: Interracial Unions, Same-Sex Unions, and the Changing American Family*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rostosky, Sharon Scales, Beth A. Korfhage, Julie M. Duhigg, Amanda J. Stern, Laura Bennett, and Ellen D. B. Riggle. 2004. "Same-Sex Couple Perceptions of Family Support: A Consensual Qualitative Study." *Family Process* 43(1): 43-57.
- Rudd, Jim. "Put Homosexuals To The Sword ." *Covenant News*. Retrieved December 28, 2008 (<http://www.covenantnews.com/rudd060607.htm>).
- Rushbrook, Dereka. 2002. "Cities, queer space, and the cosmopolitan tourist." *Gay & Lesbian Quarterly* 8(1-2):183-206.
- Ruskola, Teemu. 2005. "Gay Rights versus Queer Theory: What is left of sodomy after Lawrence v. Texas?" *Social Texts* 23(3-4): 235-249.
- Rust, Paula C. 1993. "Coming out in the age of social constructionism: Sexual identity formation among lesbian and bisexual women." *Gender & Society* 7(1): 50-77.
- . "Sexual Identity and Bisexual Identities: The Struggle for Self-Description in a Changing Sexual Landscape." Pp. 64-86 in *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Anthology*, edited by Brett Beeyman and Mickey Eliason. New York: New York University Press.
- . "Two Many and Not Enough: The Meanings of Bisexual Identities." *Journal of Bisexuality* 1(1): 31-68.

- Rust, Paula C. Rodriguez. 1999. *Bisexuality in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 2002. "Bisexuality: The State of the Union." *Annual Review of Sex Research* 13:180-240.
- Ruthven, Malise. 2005. *Fundamentalism: The Search for Meaning*. Cambridge, MA: Oxford University Press.
- Salganik, Matthew J., and Douglas D. Heckathorn. 2004. "Sampling and Estimation in Hidden Populations Using Respondent-Driven Sampling." *Sociological Methodology* 34:193-239.
- Sanchez, Casey. 2008. "'Arming' for Armageddon: Militant Joel's Army Followers Seek Theocracy." *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report*. Retrieved August 31, 2008 (<http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?aid=964>).
- . 2007. "The Latvian Connection: West Coast Anti-Gay Movement on the March." *Southern Poverty Law Center Intelligence Report*. Retrieved December 28, 2008 (<http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=1422>).
- Schneider, Beth E. 1987. "Coming Out at Work: Bridging the Private/Public Gap." *Work and Occupations* 13(4): 463-487.
- Schneider, Beth and Valerie Jenness. 1997. "Social Control, Civil Liberties, and Women's Sexuality." Pp. 472-484 in *Feminist Frontiers IV*, edited by L. Richardson, V. Taylor, and N. Whittier. New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Seidman, Steven. 2002. *Beyond the Closet: The Transformation of Gay and Lesbian Life*. London: Routledge.
- Seidman, Steven. 2001. "From Identity to Queer Politics: Shifts in Normative Heterosexuality and the Meaning of Citizenship." *Citizenship Studies* 5(3): 321-328.
- Shepard, Benjamin H. 2002. "The Queer/Gay Assimilationist Split: The Suits s. the Sluts." *Monthly Review*, May 2002: 49-62.
- Shernoff, Michael. 1995. "Male Couples and Their Relationship Styles." *The Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 2(2): 43-58.

- Sherrill, Kenneth. 1996. "The Political Power of Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29(3): 469-473.
- Smith, Anna Marie. 2001. "The Politicization of Marriage in Contemporary American Public Policy: The Defense of Marriage Act and the Personal Responsibility Act." *Citizenship Studies* 5(3): 303-320.
- Smith, David M., and Gary Gates. 2001. "Gay and Lesbian Families in the United States: Same-Sex Unmarried Partner Households." Urban Institute. August 22, 2001. Retrieved March 10, 2007 (<http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=1000491>).
- Social Capital Benchmark Community Survey. 2000. "Saguaro Seminar at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University." Silicon Valley Community Foundation.
- Soule, Sarah A. 2004. "Going to the Chapel? Same-Sex Marriage Bans in the United States, 1973 to 2000." *Social Problems* 51(4): 453-477.
- Stacey, Judith. 1996. *In the Name of the Family: Rethinking Family Values in the Postmodern Age*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.
- Stacey, Judith. 2004. "Marital Suitors Court Social Science Spin-sters: The Unwittingly Conservative Effects of Public Sociology." *Social Problems* 51(1): 131-145.
- Stacey, Judith, and Todd J. Biblarz. 2001. "(How) does the sexual orientation of parents matter?" *American Sociological Review* 66:159-183.
- Stack, Steven, and J. Ross Eshleman. 1998. "Marital Status and Happiness: A 17-Nation Study." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 60: 527-536.
- Stanley, Scott M., and Howard J. Markman. 1992. "Assessing Commitment in Personal Relationships." *Journal of Marriage & Family* 54(3): 595-608.
- Struening, Karen. 1999. "Familial Purposes: An Argument Against the Promotion of Family Uniformity." *Policy Studies Journal* 27(3): 477-493.
- Struening, Karen. 1996. "Privacy and Sexuality in a Society Divided Over Moral Culture." *Political Research Quarterly* 49(3): 505-523.

- Stucky, Matthew. 2008. "Satan Clause & His Queer Reindeer." December 16, 2008. Retrieved January 1, 2009 (<http://matthewstucky.blogspot.com/2008/12/satan-clause-his-queer-reindeer.html>).
- Sullivan, Andrew. 1989. "Here Comes the Groom." *Independent Gay Forum*, (*The New Republic*, August 28, 1989). Retrieved January 22, 2008 (<http://www.indegayforum.org/news/show/26935.html>).
- . 1995. *Virtually Normal*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Tabachnick, Barbara G., and Linda S. Fidell. 2007. *Using Multivariate Statistics*. 5th. New York: Pearson.
- Tan, P. Philip. 2005. "The Importance of Spirituality Among Gay and Lesbian Individuals." *Journal of Homosexuality* 49(2): 135-144.
- Tarrow, Sydney. 1998. *Power in Movement: Social movements and contentious politics*. 2nd. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Tennant, Neil and Chris Lowe. 1996. "Red Letter Day." Lyrics. *Bilingual*. Atlantic/WEA.
- Tetreault, Steve. 2008. "Reid pushes for polygamist crackdown: Senate hearing airs claims of criminal activity by religious sect." *Las Vegas Review-Journal/ReviewJournal.com*, July 25, 2008. Retrieved March 12, 2009 (<http://www.lvrj.com/news/25892279.html>).
- United States Bureau of the Census. 2005. American Community Survey.
- Vispoel, Walter P., Jaeyool Boo, and Timothy Bleiler. 2001. "Computerized and Paper-and-Pencil Versions of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale: A Comparison of Psychometric Features and Respondent Preferences." *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 61(3): 461-474.
- Waite, Linda J., and Maggie Gallagher. 2000. *The Case for Marriage: Why Married People Are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Wallerstein, Judith S., Julia Lewis, and Sandra Blakeslee. 2000. *The Unexpected Legacy of Divorce A 25 Year Landmark Study*. London: Hyperion.

- Warner, Michael. 1999. *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Weaver, Bryan R., and Fiona Woollard. 2008. "Marriage and the Norm of Monogamy." *The Monist* 91(3-4): 506-522.
- Wedgwood, Ralph. 1999. "The Fundamental Argument for Same-Sex Marriage." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 7(3): 226-242.
- Weeks, Jeffrey. 2004. "Same-sex Partnerships." *Feminism & Psychology* 14(1): 158-164.
- Weeks, Jeffrey, Brian Heaphy, and Catherine Donovan. 2001. *Same-Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice and Other Life Experiments*. New York: Routledge.
- Weinrich, James D., and Fritz Klein. 2002. "Bi-Gay, Bi-Straight, and Bi-Bi: Three Bisexual Subgroups Identified Using Cluster Analysis of the Klein Sexual Orientation Grid." *Journal of Bisexuality* 2(4): 109-139.
- Wejnert, Cyprian, and Douglas D. Heckathorn. 2008. "Web-Based Network Sampling: Efficiency and Efficacy of Respondent-Driven Sampling for Online Research." *Sociological Methods & Research* 37(1): 105-134.
- Weston, Kath. 1991. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe. 1998. *The Divorce Culture: Rethinking Our Commitments to Marriage and Family*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe, and David Popenoe. *The State of Our Unions, 2004: The Social Health of Marriage in America*. Piscataway, NJ: The National Marriage Project, 2004.
- Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe, and David Popenoe. *The State of Our Unions, 2005: The Social Health of Marriage in America*. Piscataway, NJ: The National Marriage Project, 2005.
- Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe, and David Popenoe. *The State of Our Unions, 2006: The Social Health of Marriage in America*. Piscataway, NJ: The National Marriage Project, 2006.
- Whitehead, Barbara Dafoe, and David Popenoe. *The State of Our Unions, 2007: The Social Health of Marriage in America*. Piscataway, NJ: The National Marriage Project, 2007.

- Whittier, David Knapp, Salvatore Seeley, and Janet S. St. Lawrence. 2004. "A comparison of web- versus paper-based surveys of gay and bisexual men who vacationed in a gay resort community." *AIDS Education and Prevention* 16(5): 476–485.
- Winston, Pamela, et al. , 1999. *Welfare, Children and Families: A Three-City Study*. Baltimore, MD: Welfare, Children and Families: A Three City Study.
- Wittman, Carl. 1969/2001. "A Gay Manifesto." Pp. 67-79 in *Come Out Fighting*, edited by Chris Bull. New York: Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books.
- Wolfson, Evan. 2004. *Why Marriage Matters: America, Equality, and Gay People's Right to Marry*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004.
- Worth, Heather, Allison Reid, and Karen McMillan. 2002. "Somewhere over the rainbow: love, trust and monogamy in gay relationships." *Journal of Sociology (The Australian Sociological Association)* 38(3): 237-253.
- Yep, Gust A., Karen E. Lovaas, and John P. Elia. 2003. "A Critical Appraisal of Assimilationist and Radical Ideologies Underlying Same-Sex Marriage in LGBT Communities in the United States." *Journal of Homosexuality* 45(1): 45-64.
- Yip, Andrew K. T. 1997. "Attacking the Attacker: Gay Christians Talk Back." *The British Journal of Sociology* 48(1): 113-127.
- Yip, Andrew K. T. 2004. "Same-sex Marriage: Contrasting Perspectives among Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Christians." *Feminism & Psychology* 14(1): 173–180.



VITA

Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Troy A. McGinnis

Local Address:

PO Box 72886  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89170

Home Address:

10311 Silverbrook Place  
San Antonio, TX 78254

Degrees:

Bachelor of Arts, Sociology, 1995  
The University of Texas at Austin

Master of Arts, Sociology, 1999  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Dissertation Title: Quest for Quotidian: A National Survey of Non-Heterosexual Attitudes  
Toward Marriage

Dissertation Examination Committee:

Chairperson, Dr. Andrea Fontana, Ph. D.  
Committee Member, Dr. Norval D. Glenn, Ph.D.  
Committee Member, Dr. Ronald W. Smith, Ph. D.  
Committee Member, Dr. Michael Ian Borer, Ph. D.  
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. Christopher Heavey, Ph. D.