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Attitudes Toward Gay Marriage: A Comparison of Competing Explanatory Models

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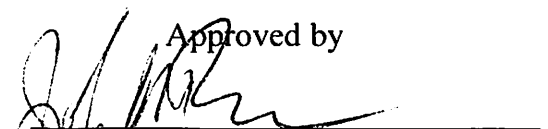Attitudes toward Same-Sex Marriage: A Comparison of Competing Explanatory Models
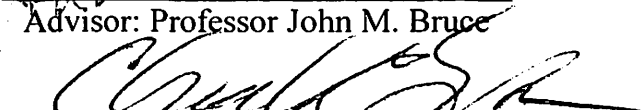
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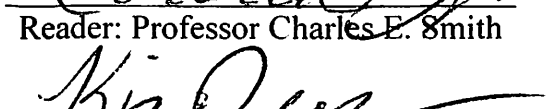the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

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ABSTRACT

For my thesis, I conducted a study to investigate the nature of attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Throughout this work, I will cover the relevant information on the past and present of same-sex marriage, as well as a review of research done in the area of polling about it. The main focus of my research was to find out the underlying factors of opinions on homosexual marriage. Using polling data from the 2009 General Social Survey, I was able to put together a series of regression analyses that tested the dependent variable, opinions about allowing same-sex marriage, with various independent variable, which were a set of demographic factors as well as other factors, such as political party affiliation, religiosity, tolerance toward issues concerning homosexuality, tolerance toward unpopular groups, and scientific knowledge. I did this to see if accounting for certain factors would render others insignificant in looking at opinions on same-sex marriage. I found that there is not one main factor that is mostly likely to influence opinion on same-sex marriage; rather all of the factors provide their own independent contribution to opinions. Each factor remains significant even after taking all of the factors into account. The nature of opinion on same-sex marriage is very complicated and is influenced by a number of different factors.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Same-Sex Marriage

No matter how hard we try to keep church and state separate, it seems the two cannot escape one another, especially when it comes to gay marriage. Gay marriage is one of the country's most salient social issues. Is it a matter of morality or an equality issue? Many people feel that it could go either way. If it is an issue of morality, then should the government have the power to control the issue? If it is an equality issue, then do they not have every right? If we are split on the issue, then who decides? People all over the country have very strong feelings about making gay marriage legal. Public opinion on the issue is one factor that drives whether policies in the states favor gay marriage or not. When policy that the people do not agree with is made, many times there will be a backlash. The most important thing about public opinion is that it can help us foresee what is in store for the issue's future. Analyzing trends and patterns can help uncover a story that may not be apparent on the surface.

Arguments in favor of same-sex marriage

Since its founding, America has seen many civil rights movements. The latest in the series has been the gay and lesbian rights movement. Although some states have done more now to further homosexual equality, achievements have been slow. Currently the debate is about the right to marry for homosexuals. For the last forty years homosexuals across the country have been exhausting many avenues in order to achieve equality, with heterosexuals and be able to marry whomever they want. It has only been very recently that a few states have begun to allow homosexuals to marry and still there has been

backlash in other states as well as from the federal government.

While many may wonder why homosexuals prefer marriage as opposed to civil unions, the gay and lesbian marriage movement has many reasons for preferring marriage to unions. Homosexual couples fighting for the right to marry are not just asking because they simply want to be able to say they are married, they are seeking a number of "legal benefits" that are only afforded to them through the "state-sanctioned contract." R. Claire Snyder (2006) lists a number of issues that unmarried gay and lesbian couples must struggle with, such as financial matters like health insurance, tax benefits, retirement planning, supporting each other in making medical decisions, having "spousal privilege" in the courtroom, childcare concerns when dealing with second-parent adoption, child custody, visitation rights in the case of divorce, and so much more. "The political struggle for same-sex marriage is not about the religious right," writes Snyder (2006, 15). In places where civil unions are offered as a compromise, Michael Mello (2004) argues that civil unions do not offer an equal compromise. "Civil unions are unequal in status, unequal in their interstate portability, and unequal as regards benefits and obligations afforded by federal law" (Mello 2004, 143). Gay and lesbian couples just want to have the same marital rights as heterosexual couples do so that they can have a safe and secure future.

In 1990, the Hawaiian attorney general said that under the United States Constitution "the right to marry is considered to be a fundamental one" but this right is not for same-sex couples. This was the attorney general's rationalization for claiming that the state's discrimination toward gay and lesbian couples in not issuing them marriage licenses was lawful (Eskridge 1996, 4). The obvious question to ask seems to be whether

a fundamental right can be prohibited to anyone. To many couples, sexual orientation surely cannot be a reason to deny them a fundamental right. Denial of the right to marriage for same-sex couples has been described by some courts as a violation of equal protection--a case of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

Evolution of same-sex marriage

The fight for marriage equality for gays and lesbians is not just a contemporary battle. (There is a timeline, Table 1.1, included at the end of the text.) Same-sex couples have been seeking out the right to marry since the 1970s. Gilbert Zicklin (1998) notes *Baker v. Nelson* (1970) in Minnesota and *Singer v. Hara* (1974) in Washington as two of the most important cases of this early era. Although the plaintiffs' arguments had strong foundations relying on due process and equal protection, neither of the appellate judges in either state found in favor of granting same-sex couples the right to legally marry (Zicklin 1998). David Moats (2004) recalls similar cases during the 1970s in Kentucky, Wisconsin and other states that all also ended in defeat for homosexuals. William N. Eskridge offers an example of a legislative effort that was made in 1975. A councilman in the District of Columbia proposed to authorize same-sex marriage in the reworking of a marriage law, but the Catholic Archdiocese and other opponents raised such strong objections that the proposal was withdrawn (Eskridge 1996, 49). In 1974 the Washington state supreme court formulated the legal definition of marriage. It defined marriage as "the legal union of one man and one woman as husband and wife," which shows up again later in the1996 Defense of Marriage Act (Mohr 2005, 57). Eskridge states that while early couples at times "had initial success…once the community at large was alerted to

the possibility of 'gay marriage,' political opposition surfaced with a vengeance and crushed the effort" (Eskridge 1996, 56). Few, if any, surveys were conducted in these early years, so it is almost impossible to precisely gauge public opinion then, but some reasonable inferences are possible. With few successes and a plethora of failures, same-sex couples have been dealing with opposition for many years. I think it is safe to say that they did not begin their fight with much of the public on their side. If anything, the public was largely against gay marriage, and lawmakers and judges who had to decide on the matter followed suit with the public.

In the early 1990s, the gay marriage debate made its way to the national stage. According to Zicklin, as time passed more people became knowledgeable on the issue and a shift in attitude took place making way for the first major gain for homosexuals wanting to marry. He says that attitude shift is exemplified in the landmark 1993 case, *Baehr v. Lewin*, in the Hawaii Supreme Court (Zicklin 1998). Prior to this case, the plaintiffs in all cases dealing with same-sex marriage had lost (Eskridge 1996). *Baehr* ruled that it was sexual discrimination to deny same-sex couples marriage licenses and therefore a violation of Hawaii's constitution, specifically the equal protection provision. The case was remanded back to the lower courts, indicating that marriage licenses could not be denied to same-sex couples without a "compelling reason." In 1996, the Hawaii trial court found that the state failed to give such a reason that justified discrimination, thus under the Hawaii law same-sex couples did have the right to marry (Cahill 2004). This was the first court of last resort to build a reasoning based upon a constitutional principle to support same-sex marriage (Pinello 2006). Soon after *Baehr,* the conservatives in the legislature began working to find a compromise. In the spring of

1997, the Hawaii Legislature proposed a constitutional amendment saying "the legislature shall have the power to reserve marriage to opposite-sex couples." This language appeared on a November 1998 ballot (Synder 2006, 67), and with 69% of Hawaii voters in favor of the amendment, the ballot initiative was ratified (Pinello 2006). Although *Baehr* was overturned, same-sex couples were still able to receive limited rights under the Reciprocal Beneficiaries Act, thus the compromise (Snyder 2006). Zicklin asserts that "*Baehr* [highlighted] the possibility that it is not legal reasoning alone that is at work in deciding these cases but also the temper of the times" (Zicklin 1998, 131). If the citizens in the state and the country are starting to warm up to the idea of same-sex marriage, then maybe the courts are reacting to this change. Nonetheless, the overwhelming support for the Hawaii amendment that overturned *Baehr* leads one to wonder if Zicklin's assertion of the *Baehr* decision being a "temper of the times" is correct. It may have just been more indicative of the "temper" of the court, seeing as though the public was not ready for it just yet.

Hawaii's attempt to resolve the issue led the rest of the country to preempt its effects. National opposition mounted in response to the Hawaii case. Congress passed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996. This act explicitly defined marriage as a "legal union between one man and one woman," prohibiting same-sex couples married in states where it is legal from receiving federal marriage benefits (Public Law No. 104-199). The act further gave all states the right to not recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states (Cahill 2004, 5).

As of the fall of 2009, five states allowed same-sex marriages--Massachusetts in 2003, Connecticut in 2008, Iowa in 2009, Vermont in 2009 and New Hampshire in 2010.

Seven states offer couples the right to either a civil union or domestic partnership--

Washington, Oregon, Nevada, Maine, Hawaii, California, and New Jersey (Lax &

Phillips 2009). All of the aforementioned states besides Massachusetts and Connecticut

have just *recently* extended marriage equality. If states are coming around because of

what the people want then the liberalization of Americans toward the idea of same-sex is

a fairly new trend. Are warmer feelings prevalent across the whole nation or are they

more present in the states that have crossed the threshold? While a handful of states have

come to allow same-sex marriage, 39 states have instituted DOMA laws, constitutional

bans, or something similar (NPR). Compared to the past, same-sex marriage proponents

have gained quite a bit in a short amount of time, but there is still an incredibly large

majority of the country that has to decide to support the idea of gay marriage before

advocates can claim a substantial and lasting victory.

Overview of how states come to legalize same-sex marriage

Whether a majority of the country is on board with same-sex marriage or not,

some states have moved forward and begun legally granting gay and lesbian couples the

right to marry. Since 2003 five states have legalized gay marriage either through the state

supreme courts or state legislatures. A few states had to endure the backlash of the gay

marriage opposition when laws or rulings were challenged by statewide ballot initiatives

allowing the states' citizens to decide. The examples of each state can be helpful in

providing possible insight into public opinion in the states on same-sex marriage.

In November 2003, Massachusetts became the first state to allow gay and lesbian

couples to legally marry. The state Supreme Court ruled that Massachusetts had no right

to deny same-sex couples the right to marry in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* (Brewer 2008, 71). Exactly five years later in Connecticut the court ultimately ruled that not allowing same-sex couples to marry "violated the constitutional guarantees of equal protection under the law" (McFadden 2008, 1). Next came Iowa, the first, and as of now, the only, rural state to legalize same-sex marriage. In April 2009, the Iowa Supreme Court made a unanimous decision to lift the ban on gay marriage that had been in place for the last ten years (Richburg 2009). That same month, Vermont became the first state in the country to legalize gay marriage through the legislature. Both houses passed the bill to recognize gay marriage as legal, but the governor did not sign it. The legislature overturned his veto (Richburg 2009). The latest effort took place in New Hampshire, where the legislature passed a bill to legalize same-sex marriage in May 2009. Gay and lesbian couples there were kept waiting until June 2009 when the governor finally signed the bill. New Hampshire did not start performing the marriages until January 2010 (Goodnough 2009).

Three of the five states legalized same-sex marriage through court order and two through the state legislature. I believe that there may be connection between the manner of legalization and public opinion. A court decision is a ruling made by a group of 5 to 9 judges. In order to pass a bill in the legislature, it must be passed by both chambers and signed by the governor of the state (or have enough support from the legislature in order to overturn a possible veto). In a comparison between the court and the legislature, it obviously takes a lot more people to agree to pass a bill than it does to make a court ruling. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Iowa the state Supreme Court judges are appointed, while members of state legislatures are voted into office by the citizens of the

state. If the citizens of a state vote a member into the senate or the house and that member then subsequently votes in favor of a bill legalizing gay marriage, then I believe it can be said that there is at least an indirect connection between public opinion and the legalization of gay marriage through the legislature. That is, of course, unless the citizens of a state vote to overturn a decision made by lawmakers or court judges.

Perhaps even more indicative of public opinion would be state ballot initiatives dealing with same-sex marriage. Recently, the citizens of two states, California and Maine, have sought to challenge the legalization of gay marriage in their respective states. On May 15, 2008, the California Supreme Court struck down two laws that prevented gay and lesbian couples from marrying in the state and ruled that same-sex couples have the right to marry under the state constitution. At the time, this made California the second state to allow gay marriage in the United States (Liptak 2008). With a 4 to 3 majority, Chief Justice Ronald M. George and the rest of the majority based their decision on two rationales. "The first was that marriage is a fundamental constitutional right" and that tradition is not enough to deny that right to anyone (Liptak 2008, 2). The second was based on equal protection groundings. According to Liptak, religious and conservative groups were already geared up to support a ballot initiative in November to amend the state constitution and overturn the ruling. In November of 2008, California voters were faced with the decision of overturning the court ruling and amending the constitution to ban same-sex marriages. The initiative known as Proposition 8 won the support of at least 52% of voters (Archibold & Goodnough 2008). The people had spoken, and the right to marry that homosexuals had been granted lasted less than five months. Subsequently, many same-sex marriage supporters countered with

a suit challenging its adoption. In May 2009, the court voted 6 to 1 upholding the ban on same-sex marriage (Schwartz 2009). In the court's opinion, Chief Justice George said that all the ban did was reserve "the official designation of the term 'marriage' for the union of opposite-sex couples" and that same-sex couples still had the option of civil unions and "[enjoy] all the constitutionally based incidents of marriage" (Schwartz 2009, 1). The ruling also ensured that all the couples who had married while it was legal would still be recognized as such.

In Maine, the gay marriage opponents worked quickly to repeal a state law that the legislature passed legalizing gay marriage in May 2009. This marked the first time a same-sex marriage law enacted by the legislature was to be challenged. On November 3, 2009, voters went to the polls to vote on Question 1, and the vote turned out in favor of gay marriage "foes." 53% of Maine voters voted "yes" to repeal the law that allowed gays and lesbians to marry (HuffingtonPost.com 2009). Shortly before the ballot was slated to be voted on in Maine, Abby Goodnough stated that "gay-rights advocates say a defeat [in Maine] could further a perception that only judges and politicians embrace same-sex marriage" (NYtime.com 2009, 1). After this, same-sex marriage has been defeated in all 31 states where it has been put up to a vote by the people (Huffingtonpost.com 2009). There were high hopes in Maine because, thus far, the New England area has been the most accepting of gay marriage. According to Blumenthal, reporting within days of the vote, a few opinion polls forecasted either the outcome favoring same-sex marriage supporters or a dead even heat (Blumenthal 2009). In addition, he noted the confusing wording of the ballot question itself, "Do you want to reject the new law that lets same-sex couples marry and allows individuals and religious

groups to refuse these marriages?" Voting "yes" would have been a vote in favor of gay

marriage opponents, and "no" would be in favor of supporters. Not only were the results

somewhat of a surprise, they could have also been unintentional. Especially considering

the fact that the proponents of same-sex marriage also had the edge in funds with $4

million as opposed to the $2.5 million the other side had (Huffingtonpost.com).

State polling trends

While ballot initiatives may be a representation of what voters think, public

opinion polls are conducted to find out what the general population think. The trends are

rather unpredictable. Looking at polling data in each state that allows gay marriage, it

seems that there are quite a few disparities, so making reasonable inferences on opinion

could be difficult. According to a *Boston Globe*/WZB-TV Poll conducted in April 2003,

50% of Massachusetts voters supported gay marriage and 44% opposed (Taskforce 7). In

April of 2004, after the Supreme Court legalized gay marriage, in another *Boston Globe*

Poll, the vote was split even with 47% saying they did not support a constitutional

amendment to ban gay marriage and 47% saying they would support it (Taskforce 6).

Quinnipiac University reports on two polls they conducted before and after the

Connecticut court ruling. In February 2007, 39% say gays and lesbians should be allowed

to marry and 22% said there should be no legal recognition for gay and lesbian couples.

Also, 33% would approve of civil unions but not marriage (Quinnipiac.edu, Feb 07).

Given the same three choices in December 2008, 43% said gay and lesbian couples

should have the right to marry, 39% supported civil unions, and only 12% said there

should be no recognition (Quinnipiac.edu, Dec 08). Iowans provide us with our only non-

northeastern example. In March 2009, the University of Iowa conducted a telephone poll and found that 36.7% of Iowa voters opposed same-sex marriage and civil union, 26.2% support gay marriage, and 27.9% opposed gay marriage but would be fine with civil unions (UI news release 2009). In September 2009, *The Des Moines Register* released the results of a poll that asked the question a different way. When asked how they would vote on the matter of gay marriage, 41% said they would vote for a ban on gay marriage while 40% said they would allow gay and lesbian couples to continue marrying. In addition, 92% expressed that allowing gay marriage had not changed their lives (Clayworth & Beaumont 2009). Feelings are expressed in New Hampshire in the "State of the State Poll" done by Dartmouth College in May 2009. In that poll, 44.8% of respondents opposed gay marriage and 40.8% supported it (Senz 2009). In a Maine "Daily Kos" poll, Maine citizens were asked about the legalization of same-sex marriage in July 2009. It was reported that 41% of respondent approved of the decision whereas 49% disapproved (Daily Kos 2009).

DOMA and State Constitutional Amendments

In 1996, the United States Congress passed DOMA with ease. The House approved with a vote of 342 to 67 and the Senate with 85 to 14, and it was signed into law by former-President Bill Clinton "without a whimper" (Mello 2004, 14). Before its passage, proponents of DOMA bellowed concerns of "threats to the family and Western civilization" if gay couples were given the right to marry (Cahill 2004). Since DOMA was in part a reaction to Hawaii, supporters proclaimed they were trying to protect the rest of the country from a single state's will (Lewis & Edelson 2000). Many thought that

although DOMA passed in Congress, its constitutionality would likely be challenged by claims that it violated the full faith and credit clause (Cahill 2004). Additionally, there have been assertions made that it violates the substantive due process protections and equal protection guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment (Burkart & Rousslang 2008). Though these could be valid claims made against DOMA, it has remained in place for the last thirteen years.

As of September 2009, thirty nine states had some sort of prohibition against gay marriage, such as DOMA laws, constitutional bans, or something similar. Of these thirty nine, thirty have passed constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage (Domawatch.org). Most relevant to the purpose of this analysis are the states that have passed constitutional amendments banning gay marriage through referenda because they translate the will of the people feeling into law. Notable are the southern states such as Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, Tennessee, and South Carolina, which all passed amendments with about 80% of voters in favor. While in most states with bans votes in favor have been overwhelming, there have been a couple that only passed by narrow margins. Oregon had the narrowest margin of eleven states in 2004 with the final tally at 56% to 44%. In 2006, South Dakota saw an even narrower margin of 52% to 48%. One exceptional example is the first state to reject a proposed constitutional amendment. In 2006 Arizona voters did not pass Proposition 107 by a vote of 51.4% to 48.6% (Burkart & Rousslang 2008). Nonetheless, the state's voters did end up passing a constitutional ban against same-sex marriage two years later in the 2008 election (NPR). With such great support for most initiatives to ban gay marriage through state constitutions, it seems unlikely that the citizens of these states will see gay marriage performed in their states

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any time soon.

Anti-gay marriage movement

　　Just like there are always two sides to a coin, there are two sides to every political issue. I began with the arguments of the gay marriage advocates and now turn to those of gay marriage opponents. Over the years homosexuals have gained rights in various policy areas and have been denied rights in others, but the most recent battle over same-sex marriage rights has seen passionate advocates on both ends of the spectrum. For many, gay marriage is a different issue than all other gay and lesbian rights because of its religious component. In addition to religiously based concerns, opponents hold reservations for a number of other reasons. There are the traditional connotations that surround the meaning of marriage, the lack of procreating capabilities in gay and lesbians, fear of homosexual education in schools, and many more. Jean Hardisty, a scholar in right wing politics, argued in 1999 that those fighting opposite gays and lesbians have a "sincere belief that homosexuality is an abomination because it is a sin against God" (Cahill 2004, 20). The anti-gay coalition is mostly made up of conservatives, Christian right groups, and "pro-family" organizations (Cahill 2004). These organizations are imperative to the failures and successes of gay and lesbian rights initiatives. Their main focus and dominant strategy has been mainly through local and statewide ballot initiatives (Cahill 2004). In addition to their influence, those with anti-gay marriage views do not limit themselves to efforts within their states of residence. For example, in the Maine Question 1 campaign, Mormons from Utah as well as people from other states volunteered to aid in achieving the anti-gay marriage outcome (Goodnough

2009). Additionally, according to Cahill, anti-gay marriage groups "outspend gay and lesbian rights organizations by at least a four-to-one ratio." With all their other resources, they are able to "wield significant political influence in support of [their] agenda" (Cahill 2004, 20).

One of the arguments of the anti-gay marriage movement is that "allowing same-sex couples to marry will hurt or even destroy marriage for heterosexuals." They are afraid that the definition and institution of marriage will deteriorate (Cahill 2004, 27). According to the Traditional Values Coalition (TVC), "[Gays] want same-sex marriage as a way of destroying the concept of marriage altogether" (Traditional values.org). TVC uses quotes from various gay and lesbian rights activists to bolster their claim. Another argument lies within the idea that the aim of marriage is to procreate (Eskridge 1996), the fear being that if we "separate marriage from reproduction," [unconventional couples] will demand the right to be married "just for the benefit of it all" (Sokolowski 2004). A fairly recent concern of gay marriage opponents has been homosexual education in schools. Marc Mutty, chairman of Stand for Marriage Maine, warned during the Maine Question 1 campaign that if gay marriage were to become legal, public schools would begin teaching children about it. Despite reassurance from Maine's attorney general that this would not be a requirement for schools, the activist continued to remind people of the chance. The spreading of this rhetoric was also used in the California Proposition 8 campaign by anti-gay groups (Goodnough 2009).

The aim of anti-gay marriage groups is to convince people ultimately to believe what they believe and get them to vote accordingly. "Given the success the anti-gay marriage movement has had in promoting anti-gay marriage laws in [a majority] of

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states," it seems much of the public must either be persuaded by their campaigns or harbor similar feelings (Cahill 2004). Even in states such as Oregon, where opinions and history had shown that the citizens were very favorable toward gay and lesbian rights and marriage, when voters were asked to decide on amending the constitution to ban gay marriage in 2004, the anti-gay rights campaign prevailed with vote at 57% to 43% (Brewer 2008). In the 2008 Proposition 8 election, the anti-gay marriage side was shown to be 17 points behind in the polls early in the campaign. Jeff Flint, a Prop 8 strategist, said "We caused Californians to rethink the issue." The final vote count ended up at 52% to 48%. Flint further said, "We made them realize that there are broader implications to society and particularly the children when you make that fundamental change that's at the core of how society is organized, which is marriage" (Garrison, DiMassa, & Paddock 2008). The anti-gay marriage coalition accomplished a lot within a few years with so many wins and a very small number of losses. It is doubtful that either side will ever give up, and the future of the issue appears rather uncertain at this point in time.

Chapter 2

Same-sex Marriage and Public Opinion

The aim of this work is to learn more about American public opinion on gay marriage. I now move to introduce and discuss relevant information in the sphere of public opinion and homosexuality. I will not only provide an overview of previous research done in the area, but I will also be looking at how opinion of same-sex marriage has moved over time. Additionally, I examine opinion of gay marriage in relation to opinions of other gay and lesbian rights, the different sources of opinion variation, and how opinions differ across to sub-groups. Each of these aspects illuminates the larger picture of what factors drive public opinion on gay marriage. Looking at opinion over time will be helpful in showing where the future of the issue lies. Comparing the gay marriage movement to other gay and lesbian rights movements will be done in order to gain an idea of which issues have been successful and which have not in hopes of discovering why it is that the public has been more favorable toward one issue and not another. Sources of opinion variation and a look at opinions by sub-groups will be offered as a transition to the research portion of this work.

Past Research

Many have conducted research to learn more about the public and their feelings about gay marriage. The issue goes much further than merely agree or disagree. While two polls have yielded identical results, one thing has remained consistent so far—those who oppose gay marriage continue to outnumber those who favor it. Scholars have

studied the issue from many different viewpoints. Some of the research that has been conducted has focused on the differences between attitudes toward same-sex marriage versus civil unions, how beliefs about the origins of homosexuality can influence opinions on gay marriage, whether state marriage laws have affected certain attitudes, and how religion affects feelings toward same-sex marriage.

Data has shown that people feel much more favorable toward approving civil unions for homosexuals than they do toward extending to them the right to marry. According to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in August 2009, 57% of Americans support allowing gay and lesbians to enter into civil unions and have the same rights as married couples (Miller & Tisdale et al. 2009). After examining copious amounts of polling data on gay marriage and civil unions, Brewer and Wilcox (2005) found that if people are given the opportunity in a survey to express opposition to gay marriage, then they would be more likely to approve of civil unions. They speculate that civil unions may be seen by many as a compromise.

"Some people attribute homosexuality to lifestyle choices while others believe it is innate, genetic in origin," say Haider-Markel and Joslyn in study done in 2008 about attribution and its influence on people's opinions regarding gay and lesbian rights (291-2). According to them, beliefs about the attribution of homosexuality are related to feelings toward homosexuals and policies specific to homosexuals. The data show that those who attribute homosexuality to genetics express the most favorable opinions toward allowing gay marriage. Additionally, it is shown that attribution's influence is the soundest predictor of policy preferences toward homosexuals, even stronger than ideology and religion. However, it is also stated that people's ideas about attribution are

shaped by ideology and religion. Another interesting thing exhibited in this work is the

trend in genetic attribution. In 1977, 13% of people felt that genetics were the cause of

homosexuality. That number climbed to 41% in 2006. A table tracks both thoughts on

attribution and gay marriage and it is shown that the two follow similar paths to one

another (Haider-Markel & Joslyn 2008). Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) conclude

saying, "If homosexuality comes to be largely viewed as a result of genetics, our results

predict greater support for gay and lesbian civil rights" (308).

Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, and Wright (2008) published a study that "examines

attitudes toward gay marriage within the context of concern over the weakening of

heterosexual marriage" (345). In addition to looking at attitudes divided by subgroup

such as gender, age, and race, they also looked at people with or without cohabitation

experience, people with children, and people in states that passed and failed covenant

marriage laws. A covenant marriage law is "designed to strengthen heterosexual

marriage" and was first passed in Louisiana, while Minnesota considered but did not pass

such a law. The results indicated that blacks, men and older people were more opposed to

gay marriage than whites, women, and younger people. The polling data were compared

in these two states, and it was found that the residents of Louisiana harbored much more

negative attitudes toward gay marriage than did the residents of Minnesota (Brumbaugh

et al. 2008).

Religion is one of the biggest factors influencing views about homosexuals, and

when it comes to marriage, the religiously devout tend to feel even stronger. People not

only have the Bible and God to guide their opinions, polls show that regular church

attendees say "clergy are nearly as likely to address homosexuality from the pulpit as

they are to speak out about abortion or prayer in school" (Pew 2003, 1). According to

polls, 55% of those who are preached to about homosexuality have a "very unfavorable

view of gay men" while only 32% of those who are not preached to feel the same. In fact,

in the 2004 election, 67% of white Evangelical Protestants who attend church weekly

ranked gay marriage as a very important issue. "Gay marriage ranks as high as the

economy, higher than Iraq, and just a step below terrorism in the minds of these voters,

who make up 17% of registered voters" (Pew 2004, 10). In this study, 81% of white

Evangelical Protestants reported that they were opposed to allowing gay marriage.

Public Opinion over Time

In 1988, the *National Opinion Research Center* asked in a poll, "Do you agree or

disagree: Homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another." Eleven

percent of respondent said they agree and 69% said they disagree. Sixteen years later in

2004, the same question was asked again and at that time 30% said they agreed while

54% said they disagreed (Brewer & Wilcox 2005). Over time, the public has been

moving closer to accepting gay marriage. The trend has been slow, but clear. Even

though more people are moving toward approval, the majority continues to be held by the

opposition.

Data from Gallup show interesting trends within a shorter time span of 1996 to

2009. When asked in 1996 if "marriages between same-sex couples should or should not

be recognized by the law as valid with the same rights as traditional marriage," 68% said

they should not be and 27% said they should be (Jones 2009). Comparing this to the

NORC poll conducted in 1988, we can see that while the number of people opposing

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same-sex marriage had not changed much, the number of those becoming more comfortable with the idea had grown considerably. When Gallup asked the question again in 2009, 57% said they should not be recognized and 40% said they should (Jones 2009). Once again comparing to the NORC poll from 2004 we can see the same trend of growing support over time while the number of those opposing seems to be changing less. Although according to Jones, "in recent years support had appeared to stall, peaking at 46% in 2007" and after that it has remained at 40% the last two times the question was asked in 2008 and 2009 (Jones 2009). Jones found the lack of change noteworthy because of the environment in which it is taking place—citing the increase in the number of states that have legalized gay marriage. In a report released by The Pew Research Center in May 2009 entitled "Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2009," it is shown that although national opinion shows the opposition with a strong hold, numbers in the Northeast, where gay marriage rights have gained the most footing, are not inconsistent with legislative action. "New England respondents favor same-sex marriage by a margin of 55% to 39%, while those in the greater Northeast region support it by 52% to 38%" (Pew 2009).

The trends have not always moved in one direction. There have been times where we have experienced an "anti-gay backlash" (Persily, Egan, & Wallsten 2006). A "backlash results when the public goes in the opposite direction of the court" (Egan & Persily 2009, 1). According to the data, this phenomenon occurred in 2003 after the two court decisions, *Lawrence v. Texas*, which struck down a sodomy law in Texas, and *Goodridge v. Massachusetts Department of Health*, which lifted the state ban on gay marriage, took place and continued until 2005. "As media coverage of gay marriage

increased, so did the share of the public opposing it." The figures show that in the months

following the *Lawrence* decision, public opinion of those favoring gay marriage went

from 38% to 30% (Persily, Egan, & Wallsten 2006, 21). Over the next few years, the

media stories decreased and eventually disappeared. By 2005, opinions went back and in

some cases even exceeded their pre-Lawrence levels (Persily, Egan, & Wallsten 2006).

Persily, Egan and Wallsten (2006) speculate as to why this backlash occurred by

referencing the "one-sided information flow" on the issue of gay marriage during this

time. Also, "no nationally prominent politician took a pro-gay marriage stance during the

period in which we see a backlash" (15)

According to Persily and Egan, "If current trends continue, a majority of

Americans will support same-sex marriage by the year 2014" (4). With the growing

number of states that have now legalized gay marriage it seems that opinion will likely

follow suit in conjunction with legislation. Even with the lapse in opinion caused by

Goodridge and *Lawrence,* there seems to be a clear path that opinion is following and it

is toward majority support of gay marriage. It has taken many years to get where opinion

is today. Karlyn Bowman (2009) says the "growing acceptance" can be attributed to the

fact that 6 of 10 people told Gallup in 2008 that a person close to them had revealed

being gay. Further, there have been changes in people's opinions about the nature of

homosexuality. "Of those polled, 12% said it was something you were born with in 1977;

now 39% believe that is the case" (Bowman 2009, 1).

Public opinion of same-sex marriage vs. other gay rights movements

　　　The same-sex marriage movement has been long and arduous for those

championing equal rights, but it is most certainly not the only gay and lesbians' rights movement that exists. Mucciaroni (2008) cites "the controversy" and "extensive media coverage" of the same-sex marriage debate as the reasons that many believe that this is "all there is to the politics of gay rights." He goes on further to say that "gay rights include more much more than marriage." Craig, Martinez, Kane and Gainous (2005) divide gay and lesbian rights movements into two categories: those dealing with civil rights and liberties and those dealing with morality--with gay marriage falling into the latter of the two. According to Craig et al., "the American public appears to be, on average, both supportive of and hostile to homosexuals and gay rights, depending upon the specific question asked" (Craig et al. 2005). Public opinion has reached strong majorities in supporting laws protecting homosexuals from hate crimes and discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and lifting the ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military (Mucciaroni 2008). It seems that the American public has an easier time being supportive of "civil liberties and rights." In contrast, the country is divided over civil unions, adoption rights, and making homosexual relations legal (Mucciaroni 2008).

For each of the issues, support always been an uphill battle, but has grown over the decades. In 1977, 56% percent of people thought homosexuals "should have equal rights in job opportunities." By 2006 that number rose to 89%. Those who "favor laws to protect gays against discrimination" went from 52% in 1983 to 70% in 2004. Americans were asked in 1977 if "homosexuals should be hired for the Armed Forces" and the response of those who supported was 51%. In 2007, that number reached 79%. While the next two issues have reached majority support, their numbers do not yet compare to those

of the above mentioned. Support for legalizing homosexual relations had reach majority levels in the year 2007 with 60%, while in 1977 it was about 43%. Oddly enough, there appears to be more support for homosexual adoption than same-sex marriage. In 1993, 29% of the public supported gay adoption. By 2006 support had reached 49% with the opposition at 48% (Mucciaroni 2008, 20-22). All of these statistics portray the uphill struggle that has taken place in order to gain acceptance by the American public. It has been a long journey but they have all reached the point where they can claim majority support, while support of gay marriage still remains in the minority. According to Mucciaroni, "Large proportions of the public remain convinced that gay marriage, adoption, and sexual conduct pose threats to themselves or to society" (2008, 19)

Although support has been overwhelming in a number of gay and lesbian rights policy areas, achievements in actual policies have not reached the same success. When comparing public opinion with policy, it seems natural to assume that the two are closely related, but in the area of gay and lesbian rights that is far from the truth. The only issue that has had total success and covers the entire United States population is the legalization of homosexual conduct. Thirty-two states have hate crime legislation. 20 states plus 100 local jurisdictions outside those states have nondiscrimination laws in employment and housing. Gay and lesbian adoption is allowed in 10 states plus some jurisdictions of 15 other states (seven states ban them). The "don't ask, don't tell" policy in reference to gays and lesbians in the military still remains in place--making this the policy area that has yet to achieve any success (Mucciaroni 2008). Mucciaroni cites many possible reasons that policy and opinion do not fall hand in hand. Among those reason are the time spent pushing for a certain goal, the fact that some of the issues are "gendered"

and others are "non-gendered," and the amount of resources spent in the process of policymaking. Gays and lesbians have been asking for equality in some issue areas longer than others, such as nondiscrimination laws, and therefore more gains have been made there than in other areas such as gay marriage. It is only natural that whatever they have been working toward the longest will have achieved that greatest return. As for the nature of the issues, Mucciaroni notes, "Gays and lesbians have done worse on the military and marriage issues because they involve institutions rooted in traditional gender roles and statuses" (Mucciaroni 2008, 42). According to resource mobilization theory, homosexuals are more likely to gain success in issue areas where they outspend the opposition (Mucciaroni 2008). This theory seems like it would be true for almost any situation. Each issue is distinct and requires different strategies to be successful. Time will tell where the futures of these issues lie and if more gains are to be had in the future. While the aim of this paper is to examine the specifics of public opinion on gay marriage it is worth looking at this issue next to the other gay and lesbian rights issues to gain a bit of perspective on the matter at large.

Sources of Opinion Variation

Many possible things could be predictors of opinions on same-sex marriage. While a few reasons have been given as to why people may hold the opinions that they do, such as the role of attribution and personal contact with homosexuals, predictors offer us with an idea of who feels what. Often times it is possible to predict a person's attitude toward a certain issue based on what group he or she falls into. Lublin states, "Democrats are far more supportive of pro-gay and -lesbian initiatives than Republicans" (2005, 241).

Persily, Eagan, and Wallsten (2006) lay out the differences of opinion between the three largest racial populations in the United States, asserting that Hispanics are the most supportive of gay marriage, then whites, and lastly African Americans. Women and younger people are more likely to approve than men and older people (Brumbaugh et al. 2008). In fact, one of the strongest predictors of support for gay marriage is age, with 18 to 25 year olds reportedly being significantly more inclined to approve of same sex marriage than those over 65 (Persily, Eagan, & Wallsten 2006). Depending on the specifics, each religion holds different views when it comes to gay marriage. Catholics are more likely to support gay marriage than evangelical Protestants, and those with secular views express the most support for same-sex marriage (Brewer 2008, 33). The highly educated and those with higher socioeconomic status show great support for gay and lesbian civil liberties (Lewis 2003). Region can also be a good indicator of opinion. Southerners and Midwesterners are the least supportive of gay and lesbian rights, while Westerners and Northeasterners, and more specifically, New Englanders show the most support (Lublin 2005, Persily, Eagan, & Wallsten 2006).

Opinions on same-sex marriage by sub-group

Thus far, the opinion statistics that have been discussed have been of a collective nature. Now I turn to an examination of the actual opinions by the sub-groups mentioned above. When opinions are broken down into groups, certain trends and patterns become clear. In August 2009, the Pew Research Center conducted its annual "Religion and Public Life Survey." Their survey findings illustrate much of what is described above about how certain groups have been known to feel about gay marriage.

Table 2.1 about here

We can see some interesting things comparing the net scores over the two different years for each of group. The net scores were calculated by subtracting the "percent favor" from the "percent opposed". In just a six-year time span, opinions have changed dramatically for many groups. The opinions of men have changed considerably, but the opinions of women are even more noteworthy. The gap between the favorable and opposing is closing fast for women and it seems possible that in a few years time those favoring gay marriage could hold a majority. While Hispanics and whites move toward an equal number of supporters and opponents, African Americans move farther away with a seven point drop. Young people have grown considerably more favorable and in 2009 a majority of them support allowing gay marriage. The elderly are also surprisingly moving in a liberal direction, but are far from having anywhere near majority support for same-sex marriage. Liberal Democrats are one of two groups in 2003 that contained a majority of supporters over opponents, while Conservative Republicans turned out to be the group with the greatest opposition. The Democrats continue to gain a more supporters, while the Republicans' changed very little. The opinions of Protestants had not changed by much over the six-year span, but Catholics have liberalized tremendously. They go from an opposition leaning -25 point difference to a supportive +2 difference. The unaffiliated are the other group in 2003 where supporters of gay marriage hold the majority. The East and West, in 2009, both have an even split of supporters and opponent, while in the South and the Midwest opponents largely outnumber supporters. Education is said to have a liberalizing effect on opinion toward gay marriage, which is likely the reason that the numbers show that those who have attended at least some

college are more favorable toward allowing the legalization of same-sex marriage.

According to the numbers, each of the groups (save for African Americans) is moving in

a liberal direction. Granted, some are moving faster than others, but there seems to be a

clear trend. Nonetheless, as of yet, the opponents remain in the majority.

Chapter 3

Analysis and Findings

Now that I have covered all of the relevant background information surrounding the past and present of the issues regarding gay marriage and opinion on it, I turn to the crux of my research. At the start of this process, I wanted to find out what main forces underlie feeling about gay marriage. I found that it is not just one single thing, but many that play some role in opinions. Through a regression analysis, I will look at various groups of people to see how they feel about gay marriage and how being in a certain group moves their opinions toward support or opposition. The data used for the analysis comes from the General Social Survey conducted in 2009. The question about opinions on gay marriage serves as the dependent variable for the analysis. Respondents were asked to respond to the statement "Homosexuals should have the right to marry" with the possible response being strong agreement, agreement, neither agreement or disagreement, disagreement, or strongly disagreement. The models begin with a base of just demographic groups and progress with a different factor added to each model to see how its inclusion affects the other factors. The last model will put all of the variables into one model in hopes of discovering which factors are the most significant in determining public opinion on gay marriage.

While there may be any number of factors that influence opinion on same-sex marriage, I have narrowed the focus to select factors that I believe cover a broad array of groups. In addition to looking at various demographic factors such as race, gender, age, region, education, sexual orientation, and marital status, I will be examining the effects of

party, religion, knowledge of science, opinions toward other groups that have struggled to gain certain civil liberties, and opinions about gay and lesbian rights outside of marriage. All of these factors are unique and each provides a different contribution to the analysis. They all stem from different motivations. First, I will begin by introducing each variable that will be used in the analysis. Next, I will offer my expectations of how the results of the analysis will turn out. Finally, I will present my hypotheses for each variable along with the results of the regression analysis.

Introduction of Variables

South The South has always been an interesting region in terms of politics. It seems that it has its own unique culture that does not always fit neatly into the typical classifications. The South is primarily known for two things in politics: its conservatism and its religiosity. This combination makes things very interesting for the analysis because these are two groups that have historically been the largest in opposition to homosexual rights. The big question will be whether being from the South will still hold up when religion and party are taken into account. South is a dummy variable where, 1=South and 0=Non-South.

Gender Males and females, the two come from the same species, yet they are both completely different. When it comes to certain political issues, there seems to be a clear divide. There are some issues that are seen less favorably by men than women. Opinion toward gay marriage is one of these dividing issues. Gender is the dummy variable where, 1=female and 0=male.

Race Race, to me, is by far one of the most interesting variables. Specifically, I

will be comparing the opinions of African Americans to all others. The reason I find

African Americans as the most interesting group is because of the fact that they struggled

through their own civil rights movement, and many believe that they continue to do so.

This would lead me to believe that they might be somewhat more sympathetic toward

gays and lesbians than other races. On the other hand, many African Americans are also

known to be quite religious and conservative. Race is a dummy variable where 1=African

American and 0=not African American.

Education Education has been shown to have a liberalizing effect on political

views. While many other things can also influence a person's political dispositions

throughout life, for many, increasing years of education is likely lead to a person's views

to fall closer to the liberal end of the ideological spectrum. The question here is whether

this is true for people's attitudes toward gay marriage. The education variable was built

by using any college as a marker. The measure thus shows how people who did have

some college feel about gay marriage compared with those who have never been to

college. Education is a dummy variable where 1=any college and 0=no college.[1]

Age The next variable in the analysis is age. In a time where more and more

homosexuals are coming out and increasingly showing up in entertainment, younger

generations are being more and more exposed to homosexuals, and this may have a

liberalizing effect on them. Age is the age of respondent in years.

Sexual Orientation Just as with all of the other variables, sexual orientation is a

possible factor in deciding whether to support gay marriage or not. The specific variable

will be comparing the opinions of gays and bisexuals against all others. The literature

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[1] Other measures of education were explored, but they all produced similar results. The current dummy
variable was retained for ease of interpretation.

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shows that not all homosexuals are in favor of same-sex marriage, and using this variable in the analysis will reveal approximately how influential sexual orientation is. Sexual orientation is a dummy variable where 1=gay or bisexual and 0=all others.

Martial Status The literature shows that some people feel that allowing homosexuals to marry will somehow lessen the sanctity of heterosexual marriage. Thus, including marital status as a predictor is appropriate for this analysis. Through this, it will be revealed whether being married influences peoples thoughts. Marital status is a dummy variable where 1=married now and 0=not married.

Political Party Affiliation Partisanship is the dividing line that defines our country's political system. Party identification is a structuring tool for many people's political beliefs. Party elites have also provided the public with many clues on gay marriage. I will be measuring how these influences work with this variable. Political party affiliation is an ordinal variable that is coded 1=strong Democrat, 2=not strong Democrat, 3=independent, near Democrat, 4=independent, 5=independent, near Republican, 6=not strong Republican and 7=strong Republican.

Religiosity Religion has obvious traction on same-sex marriage, but measuring it is neither obvious nor easy. The usual variables are church attendance, a born again experience, or a view of *The Bible* as the literal word of God. Unreported analysis shows that all of these variables provide similar leverage on the underlying trait of interest.[2] For ease of interpretation, I am using "born again" status for the measure. Religiosity is thus a dummy variable where 1=a born again Christian and 0=otherwise.

Scientific Knowledge There has been a lot of debate over whether homosexuality

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[2] A factor analysis was done to determine if the three possible variables, church attendance, born-again status, or the belief in *The Bible* being the literal word of God, were on the same dimension. The results confirmed this. Born-again status was retained for ease of interpretation.

caused by genetic makeup or as a result of one's upbringing. The evidence of a genetic factor has increased over time. This is what led me to create a variable to test the effect of scientific knowledge on people's opinions. By pulling responses from a number of science-related questions, I was able to create an index and use it to see how different levels of scientific knowledge impacted upon opinions on gay marriage. Coding runs from 0, all right answers, to 5, where one would have answered 5 or more questions wrong.

Tolerance Whether people are going to support same-sex marriage or not has a lot do with how tolerant they are. Before a person can even support gay marriage, they likely have to be tolerant in general. In order to gauge tolerance levels, I have used a measure that looks at how accepting people are toward other groups, such as atheists, Communists, militarists, racists and Muslims. These are all groups that have historically had to deal with a lot of intolerance by the general public. By finding out how tolerant people are toward these groups and comparing it to how accepting they are of same-sex marriage, we can see whether disapproval is simply about tolerance or some deeper fear that people have about this specific group. The variable runs from 0 to 3. Higher scores indicate less tolerance.

Homosexual Intolerance One of the most interesting things I think this analysis will show is whether people feel similarly toward all homosexual rights or if gay marriage is put on a plane separate from other rights that do not deal with an issue of morality. Does extending support for homosexual civil liberties and attitudes toward homosexuals in general predict support for same-sex marriage? The range for this variable is from 0 to 3, where higher scores show less intolerance toward homosexual.

Expectations

I now discuss my expectations of the implications of each variable in the analysis. I briefly discuss my thoughts on whether or not I think each of the variables has the potential to make one feel supportive or not toward gay marriage. Further, I include discussions about which, if any, factors I think may have the possibility of rendering certain variables insignificant.

The South, as noted previously, has a reputation for being very conservative and religious, and since those two factors are not taken into account in this model, the prediction would be that being from the South will be a significant factor in influencing opinion on same-sex marriage. In this model, it will only be compared to the other demographic factors. Of these, a few may have the potential to affect the effect of being from the South, such as education and race. The South has a large African American population, and in addition, traditionally lags behind in education. I expect that being from the South would largely make one less supportive of gay marriage, even controlling for these other factors.

Many people enter college with one political identity but sometimes leave with another. There is something about the atmosphere of a higher educational setting that has the effect of changing peoples' views. More specifically, higher levels of education have been shown to be correlated with more liberal political attitudes (Erikson & Tedin 2007). This would lead to the expectation that the more education an individual has completed, the more likely he or she is to support same-sex marriage. It is possible that other forces exist that may alter the impact of education, such as region and age. Being educated in the South and being educated in the Northeast may not produce the same effects on a

person's politics. Does the context and setting of the educational experience matter? Or is education simply an independent factor that has the power to liberalize people? In addition, will the measure for education still stand up against age? Each of the two seems like it must have some kind of natural connection that has the potential to affect the other.

It is common knowledge that women are often more compassionate then men. Maybe this has something do with women and maternal instinct, or men and society's ideas of what defines masculinity and femininity, but regardless, the sexes definitely differ on many political issues. It is an interesting divide. Why should men and women differ in their thinking? They are both socialized in similar settings. Nonetheless, I predict that women will be more favorable toward gay marriage than men will be because of their compassionate nature. Gender actually seems like it might be a pretty weak measure and may not stand up again other stronger factors like religiosity and partisanship. It is hard to believe that just being male or female would be a contributing in terms of how a person feels about gay marriage. One interesting idea is that women had to fight for equality earlier in our history. Although most women living today did not have to deal with those struggles, it's possible that knowing that past generations had to deal with discrimination the way homosexuals are dealing with it now makes women more inclined to feel favorably toward granting rights to others who suffer discrimination.

A similar argument could be made about race. African Americans fought a long and hard struggle to gain equal rights in the United States. From this, one might assume that African Americans would be sympathetic toward homosexuals in their quest to gain the right to legally marry. Acting in the contrary direction, many African Americans

identify strongly with Christianity. The civil rights struggle is something from the past whereas religious feelings are in the present. In addition, when it comes to political issues, African Americans are quite conservative with their views on some social issues. Even though African Americans overwhelmingly identify themselves as Democrats, they do not always side with them on the issues. It is possible that their religiosity is what drives them to be more conservative toward social issues. These two things would lead me to predict that African Americans will be less supportive of same-sex marriage than other races.

It may seem tautological to consider the impact of sexual orientation on support for gay marriage, but the reality is that not all gays and lesbians actually care for the right to legally marry. Nonetheless, I feel confident when I say that gays and bisexuals will be more supportive of gay marriage than people who are not gay or bisexual. I also do not expect for any other factors to render being gay or bisexual insignificant.

Age is an interesting variable because its impact may be conditional upon a lot of other different things. The primary expectation of age is a generational difference, where older citizens are less supportive of gay marriage. Older people seem less inclined to allow change and breaking away from the norms of society. Growing up in a time when gay marriage was not an option makes it easier for them to oppose the idea

Marriage is a sacred and personal commitment for many. For some, marriage is connected to religion and deeply linked to religious values. For others, it is simply secular bond between two adults. Whatever it may mean to different people, it clearly means something very important to those who enter into it. Many heterosexual couples are afraid that allowing homosexuals to marry will somehow take something away from

their covenants. It seems reasonable to assume that a major force behind such fears can be found in religion. Religion has led many to take the position that homosexuality is "against God's will," and because of this they should not be allowed to marry. I expect that those who are married will be less supportive of gay marriage than those who are not married.

Political party affiliation is the driving force behind American politics. The two-party system that defines the American model makes it rather easy for citizens to pick a side and adopt the preferences of that side as their own. There are two main options to choose from, Democrat or Republican. Many other smaller parties do exist, but none have near the same amount of influence as the two major parties. Each party is linked to different political ideologies. Democrats constitute the more liberal party; Republicans are more conservative. How does same-sex marriage fit into each of the parties' views? Traditionally, Democrats have been more favorable toward the idea of gay marriage.[3] The Republican Party is more closely associated with religion. Religiosity coupled with conservatism would lead one to predict that the stronger one identifies oneself with the Republican Party the less favorable one will be toward the idea of allowing same-sex marriage.

Conservative Christians are some of the most active in the movement to oppose gay marriage. Because Christians make up the bulk of the opposition, it raises the question of whether the underlying force that drives opinion on same-sex marriage is rooted in religion. Thus, I expect that born again Christians will be less supportive of gay marriage than those who are not born again Christians. By using the variable of being a

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[3] A good indication of this is the fact that all but one of the states that now allow gay marriage are in the Northeast, which is the most Democratic part of the nation.

born again Christian, I am able to gauge the opinions of those who feel very strongly about Christianity and not just any person who identifies him or herself as a Christian.

The cause of homosexuality is often cast in a nature versus nurture framework. Is homosexuality caused by one's genetic makeup or are homosexuals a product of their upbringing? As of yet, no one has been able to definitively answer this question. Of course, there are people who are hopeful of one side or the other to prevail in the ongoing scientific debate. Those who are trying to prove that homosexuality is a function of biology wish to have a scientific backing for their arguments. To have science on one's side is important. Going with the theme of science, I wanted to see how scientific knowledge would influence opinions of allowing gay marriage. I expect that those who have more scientific knowledge are more inclined to support gay marriage. The assumption is that those with more scientific knowledge are more likely to be aware of the debate of nature versus nurture and have an opinion on it. It has been shown that those who think that homosexuality is beyond a person's control are more supportive of gay marriage. Alternatively, those who think that people choose to be homosexual are considerably less supportive of gay marriage. My expectation is that those with more scientific knowledge are more likely to feel that homosexuality is a function of biology and therefore will be more likely to support homosexuals' right to marry.

Across history, there have always been groups who have been traditionally discriminated against. When people feel unfavorably toward a group, they are less likely to want to allow that group to hold certain civil rights. It seems that in order for a person to support a group's civil right, one must be tolerant toward that group. The groups that I am looking at in this analysis are atheists, communists, militarists, racists, and Muslims.

It is possible that some in these groups have been discriminated against because people may feel some sense of danger in allowing these groups to have particular rights. People may feel unfavorably toward a certain group because they are afraid of the things that the group stands for. My thinking here is that tolerance is generalizable, in that being tolerant in general leads to specific incidences of tolerance. I expect that being tolerant toward allowing unpopular groups to have certain civil liberties will lead one to feel more favorably toward allowing same-sex marriage.

As mentioned above, if people are tolerant in general, they may be more supportive of homosexual civil liberties. A similar question would be a comparison of support for gay and lesbian rights and support for gay marriage. To some, it is one thing to allow a book about homosexuality in the library, but allowing homosexuals to marry is something completely different. One is an issue of a basic right based on nondiscrimination while the other can be viewed as a moral issue. A person does not have to support or agree with homosexuality in order to allow a book about it in the library, but in order to support gay marriage there has to be a level of acceptance of homosexuality. Nonetheless, if one feels supportive of homosexuality enough to allow gays and lesbians to have certain civil liberties, it seems plausible to predict that they will also be more disposed to be supportive same-sex marriage than if they were not supportive of other civil rights for gays and lesbians. While I do believe there is a correlation between the two, I do not think that just because one is supportive of civil rights for gays and lesbians that one will automatically support allowing gay marriage. Generally speaking though, the more favorably people feel toward homosexuality, the more supportive they will be toward supporting same-sex marriage.

Hypotheses and Results

In this section, I will be presenting my hypotheses about how each of the independent variables relate to the dependent variables. Next, I describe the results of the different regression models. There are seven different models. The first model only includes the seven demographic factors—region, education, gender, race, sexual orientation, age, and marital status--that make up the base of the analysis. The next model takes partisanship into account along with to the demographic factors. Then, religiosity and demographics make up Table 3.3. Scientific knowledge and demographics are the variables in focus in the next model. Table 3.5 takes general intolerance into consideration along with the demographic variables. The variables for the next model are homosexual intolerance and demographics. The last model is a composite model of all of the variables pitted against one another.

Hypothesis$_{n1}$: The South, as a region, is not less supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a1}$: The South, as a region, is less supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{n2}$: Those who have attended any college are not more supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a2}$: Those who have attended any college are more supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{n3}$: Women are not more supportive of gay marriage

Hypothesis$_{a3}$: Women are more supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{n4}$: African Americans are more not supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a4}$: African Americans are less supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{n5}$: Gays and bisexuals are not more supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a5}$: Gays and bisexuals are more supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{n6}$: Increasing age is not associated with less support for gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a6}$: Increasing age is associated with less support for gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{n7}$: Those who are currently married are not more or less supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a7}$: Those who are currently marriage are less supportive of gay marriage.

Table 3.1 about here

The South is still a significant factor even after considering education and race.

Being from the South is associated with a .524 increase in opposition to same-sex

marriage (on a 5 point scale). Thus the null, "the South, as a region, is not less supportive

of gay marriage," is rejected. In comparing the South to all of the other factors in the

Table 3.1, it actually has the second greatest effect on opinion movement.

According to the analysis, having attended some college does have somewhat of a

liberalizing effect on peoples' opinions on gay marriage. Attending at least some college

is linked with a .399 decrease in opposition for gay marriage which moves them closer to

0 on the 5 point scale, which represents full support for gay marriage. As predicted,

increasing levels of education are linked with higher levels of support for same-sex

marriage.

The regression analysis showed that women are, in fact, more sympathetic toward

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allowing gay marriage. Females exhibit a .247 decrease in opposition toward gay marriage. The expectation that women would be more supportive of gay marriage than men appears to be correct, and thus the null can be rejected.

African Americans were predicted to not be more supportive of gay marriage than non-African Americans. Being African American is linked with a .407 increase in opposition to gay marriage. Although this model does not take the factors mentioned earlier--such as religion and partisanship--into account, it does factor in education and region. Both are correlated with race and support for gay marriage. The null is rejected.

Based on the nature of this variable, it is reasonable to expect that being gay or bisexual would remain significant no matter what other factors are accounted for, and after doing the analysis this expectation is appears to be correct. In this model, being gay or bisexual has a significant effect on opinion on the five point scale, being gay or bisexual is connected with a 1.257 increase in support toward gay marriage.

While still significant when taking all the other demographic factors into account, age has the greatest impact on effecting opinion toward allowing gay marriage. As age progresses, each year older is associated with a .017 increase in opposition. The older one is, the less supportive one is toward gay marriage, and thus the null is rejected.

The model shows that being married makes one less supportive of gay marriage. It is associated with a .288 increase in opposition toward allowing gay marriage. The null is rejected. Previously I noted that religiosity may have an effect on the status of being married, but since religion was not used in this model, we will see if it will reduce the significance of being married in a subsequent model.

> **Hypothesis$_{n8}$:** Movement from Democrat to Republican on the partisan scale is not associated with lower levels of support for gay marriage.

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Hypothesis$_{a8}$: Movement from Democrat to Republican on the partisan scale is associated with lower levels of support for gay marriage.

Table 3.2 about here

Knowing that it is mostly Democrats who support gay marriage legislation, it was easy to predict that as one moves farther away from being a Democrat and closer to being a Republican on a 7 point scale of partisanship that there would be a decrease in support. As people move one unit closer to identifying more strongly with being a Republican there is a .197 increase in opposition. The null is rejected because movement from Democrat to Republican is associated with lower levels of support for gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{n9}$: Born-again Christians are not more or less supportive of gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a9}$: Born-again Christians are less supportive of gay marriage.

Table 3.3 about here

I have previously speculated that religiosity may have a possible connection to some of the demographic factors, such as being from the South and/or African American. It turns out that even with religiosity being accounted for, the demographic factors remain significant and all still offer independent contributions to opinions on gay marriage. Further, in the model that factors in being a born-again Christian, born-again status does have the largest effect on support for gay marriage. Being a born-again Christian is linked with a .788 increase in opposition to gay marriage. Thus being a born again Christian does make one less likely to support gay marriage, and the null is rejected.

Hypothesis$_{n10}$: Increasing scientific knowledge is not correlated with supportive feelings toward gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a10}$: Increasing scientific knowledge is positively correlated

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with supportive feelings toward gay marriage.

<p style="text-align: center;">**Table 3.4 about here**</p>

Levels of scientific knowledge are significant when tested against demographic factors, but this factor does not have the most influence on opinion. It turns out that age has the largest impact, measured in the Beta values (not reported), on opinion in this particular model. Nonetheless, as was expected, higher levels of scientific knowledge are correlated with more favorable opinions of gay marriage. Respondents' incorrect responses to various questions testing scientific knowledge were compared to their feelings toward gay marriage in order to predict the significance of such knowledge in predicting attitudes. For each incorrect answer there is a .125 increase in opposition in wanting to allow gay marriage.

> **Hypothesis$_{n11}$:** Increasing tolerance toward unpopular groups is not correlated with supportive feelings toward gay marriage.

> **Hypothesis$_{a11}$:** Increasing tolerance toward unpopular groups is positively correlated with supportive feelings toward gay marriage.

<p style="text-align: center;">**Table 3.5 about here**</p>

Next, I turn to the model that includes tolerance toward unpopular groups. I find that the less tolerant one is toward atheists, communists, militarists, racists, and Muslims the less likely one will be to support gay marriage. As people express increasingly unfavorable attitudes toward each of the aforementioned groups, they become more and more unlikely to express favorable attitudes toward same-sex marriage. A one unit increase in the tolerance measure is associated with a .464 increase in opposition.

> **Hypothesis$_{n12}$:** Increasing tolerance toward homosexual civil rights is not correlated with supportive feelings toward gay marriage.

Hypothesis$_{a12}$: Increasing tolerance toward homosexual civil rights is positively correlated with supportive feelings toward gay marriage.

Table 3.6 about here

The model that tests tolerance toward homosexuals and certain civil liberties and the previous model looking at tolerance toward unpopular groups worked very similarly. Again the nulls were rejected, and it is shown that decreasing acceptance and tolerance toward homosexuals and their rights is associated with less supportive feeling toward gay marriage. On a three point scale, each unit of decreasing tolerance is associated with .503 in increase in opposition.

The final model includes all of the factors previously discussed and tests them against one another. Each of the variables remains significant except one, education, which has a T-value of -.367. This is noteworthy because throughout all of the previous models, education's significance endured. Yet when all of the factors were entered into one larger model, education is the only one that became insignificant. None of the other factors are even close to being rendered insignificant. The factors that were shown to have the largest effect on opinion were political party affiliation and attitudes toward homosexuals. Party has a coefficient score of .212, and "Attitudes toward Homosexuals" has a coefficient score of .245. I did not anticipate party to have such a great influence. I thought religiosity would end up playing a greater role than party. I find the role of party interesting because party identification is linked to many of the factors in this model, such as race, region, age, and education, yet party still turns out to be the most significant predictor after looking at all of the other elements. I am not surprised that attitudes toward homosexuals played such an influential role. It seems quite obvious that people's feelings about other issues concerning gays and lesbians would have a substantial effect

on their views toward gay marriage.

Table 3.7 about here

Through this analysis, I set out to find out which of all of these factors would be the most significant in predicting attitudes toward same-sex marriage. I most certainly did not expect all of them to stay standing in the face of others. Out of the variables tested in the model, I expected factors such as gender, age, and scientific knowledge to possibly be rendered insignificant. Yet even those remained influential. Through this, I have come to learn that there is not just one looming factor that drives peoples' views on gay marriage. It is true that some variables have a greater effect than others, but all, except education, still hold some significance in determining views on gay marriage.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

It has been almost forty years since gay marriage entered the arena of political

discourse in the United States, and although it has taken quite some time to achieve any

significant gains, there are now five states that offer the right to marry for homosexual

couples, as well as the District of Columbia. As I noted in my introduction, the modern

history began with Hawaii coming close to becoming the first state to legalize same-sex

marriage back in the early 1990s and on to Massachusetts becoming the first state to

officially grant marriage licenses to homosexuals. Other states have recently gone

through a situation similar to that of Hawaii, where pro-gay marriage acts of the

legislatures and courts have been overturned by the people. So far, gay marriage has not

been supported by a vote of the people. This fact may offer more insight into opinion on

gay marriage than looking at the states that have successfully granted marriages to gays

and lesbians. Opinion seems generally headed in a liberalizing direction, but it is clear

that some groups are going to move faster than others. Views on same-sex marriage are

important because of the political and social implications of these opinions. In many

cases, the fate of gay marriage is in the hands of the voters. Many opposed to gay

marriage feel that it is morally wrong, while for gays and lesbians it is a deep-rooted

matter of equality. The problem of deciding which side is right is a contest not easily

resolved in our political system. We have seen instances when judges or lawmakers

decide to make a decision on the matter, only to encounter a backlash. At other times, the

same actions generate no backlash at all. It all just depends on the make-up and

atmosphere of each of the states. States could continue the slow trend toward legalization or perhaps they will embrace continued resistance. With such a strong opposition movement and a majority of states with DOMA laws, it is uncertain where the future of same-sex marriage lies. The patterns and trends of opinion on gay marriage may be of use by groups as they determine where to focus their efforts to make the most gains.

I began this paper with the assumption that there had to be some underlying factor that was most influential in determining opinions on gay marriage. Based on my previous knowledge, I thought that it was probably religion or partisanship that drove people's opinions on same-sex marriage. But, in fact, it turned out that the explanation was more complex. Through the findings of my analysis, I have shown that there are several other factors that can be useful in predicting attitudes toward gay marriage. Not only did each of the variables—region (South), education, gender, race (African American), sexual orientation, marital status, age, intolerance toward unpopular groups, intolerance toward homosexuals, party identification, religiosity (born-again Christians), and scientific knowledge--stand up in the smaller models, they all, with the exception of education, remained significant even when all of the variables were pitted against one another in the composite model. While party identification and homosexual intolerance had the greatest influence, the fact that they all remain significant is actually quite extraordinary. The results showed that women, the educated, and being gay or bisexual were the only three groups where membership was associated with an increase in positive feelings toward gay marriage. Based on this, it seems the odds are stacked in favor of the opposition movement. More groups are expected to not support gay marriage then are likely to support it.

I think the most interesting and useful finding in this research is that, in the composite model, all but one of the terms retained their significance. This outcome was at odds with my notion that opinions on same-sex marriage are driven by a small set of factors. It reminded me that most opinions are based on a large and broad group of forces. It is unlikely that just one thing could be the driving force behind such a complicated issue, and such an assumption is foolish to make.

The implications of my findings mean different things for both the opposition and those who support the allowing gay marriage. I believe that my findings could be seen as an impediment to the movement of supporters. The road ahead for them is already long, their achievements have been slowly gained and it seems that not many groups of people are predisposed to feeling favorably toward legalized gay marriage. There is no way to tell if these groups have the potential to be swayed in their opinions, and it cannot be true that the entirety of the groups feel the same way. However, gay marriage advocates have their work cut out for them if they want to gain support from a majority of the population.

As for the opposition, they remain in the majority. Thirty seven states have DOMA laws, and the last time same-sex marriage was put to a vote by the people it failed. Strong and coordinated efforts have limited success on the gay marriage agenda to only handful of states legalizing it. Part of the strength of the opposition rests upon the broad range of forces allied in opposition. Even with opinion on the whole moving toward liberalization, policy is still lagging. A lack of response in the states can likely be attributed to the force of the opposition movement.

The potential for future research on the publics' opinions about gay marriage is vast. My study could be expanded by looking at the trends over time. My models only look at data collected in one year. It would be interesting to take data collected over many years and compare them. One would need to compile available data over a number of years, run analyses similar to the ones I have run here, and see if there have been any substantial or even gradual changes over time. To find out whose opinions are changing and at what rate they are moving would be especially helpful for the supporters of same-sex marriage in order to find out where they could better focus their efforts. The most can be gained from polling data by looking at opinions over time. It is possible that, over time, some factors could start becoming less significant, while others become stronger in influencing opinions.

While I cannot definitively answer the question of why people feel the way they do about gay marriage, I now know who feels what about it. This is an issue that people feel very strongly about, and there is no reason to think that feelings will lessen. The more gains that supporters make, the more the opposition is going to try to counteract those gains. At this point in time, it is hard to say whether or not same-sex marriage will ever be legal all over the United States. This may be due to the fact that opinions on it are influenced by so many different factors. Younger people are more likely to support it, but there is no guarantee that as they get older they will not become more conservative in their opinions. Only time will tell if, when, and where the fate of same-sex marriage is headed.

Table 1.1 Timeline of Noteworthy Events in the Quest for the Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage

Year	Notable Moments in the Evolution of Same-Sex marriage
1970	*Baker v. Nelson*
1974	*Singer v. Hara*
1975	Councilmen unsuccessfully attempts to rework DC marriage law to include same-sex marriage
1993	*Baehr v. Lewin*
1996	US Congress passes DOMA
1997	Hawaiian Supreme Court rules that prohibiting same-sex marriage violates Equal Protection
2003	Massachusetts becomes first state to legalize same-sex marriage
2008	Connecticut legalizes same-sex marriage June- California courts legalizes same-sex marriage November- CA voters amend constitution to outlaw same-sex marriage
2009	Iowa legalizes same-sex marriage Vermont legalizes same-sex marriage May- Maine legislature legalizes same-sex marriage November- ME voters overturn legalization of same-sex marriage
2010	New Hampshire legalizes same-sex marriage District of Columbia legalizes same-sex marriage

Table 2.1 Differences in Opinions by Subgroups Compared over Six Years

	2003	2009
Men	-33	-25
Women	-24	-5
Hispanic	-15	-4
White	-28	-13
African American	-32	-40
Under 30	-1	+21
65+	-61	-45
Conservative Republicans	-73	-67
Liberal Democrats	+28	+48
Protestant	-44	-38
Catholic	-25	+2
Unaffiliated	+36	+26
East	-8	0
West	-22	0
Midwest	-23	-16
South	-44	-29
Some College	-22	-9
< High School	-38	-27

Data taken from Pew Research Center for the People and the Press and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public life surveys conducted in 2003 and 2009. Table entries are the net score (Percent favor – Percent oppose) for each group.

Table 3.1 Demographic Model of Opinion on Same-sex Marriage

Model	b	Std. Error	t
(Constant)	2.408	.141	17.108
South	.524	.081	6.454
Some College	-.399	.078	-5.147
Female	-.247	.077	-3.209
African American	.407	.115	3.540
Gay/Bisexual	-1.257	.231	-5.432
Age of respondent	.107	.002	7.800
Married	.288	.079	3.665

Adjusted R square: .209
n= 1333

Table 3.2 Partisanship and Demographics

Model	b	Std. Error	t
(Constant)	1.828	.148	12.359
South	.480	.079	6.065
Some College	-.378	.075	-5.008
Female	-.235	.075	-3.134
African American	.745	.117	6.390
Gay/Bisexual	-1.124	.223	-5.044
Married	.236	.077	3.080
Age of Respondent	.018	.002	8.312
Political Party Affiliation	.197	.019	10.245

Adjusted R Square: .216
n= 1297

Table 3.3 Religiosity and Demographics

Model	b	Std. Error	t
(Constant)	2.265	.137	16.572
South	.372	.080	4.648
Some College	-.303	.076	-4.016
Female	-.317	.075	-4.250
African American	.244	.112	2.174
Gay/Bisexual	-1.224	.223	-5.476
Married	.247	.076	3.274
Age of Respondent	.016	.002	7.636
Born-Again Christian	.788	.080	9.829

Adjusted R Square: .207
n= 1333

Table 3.4 Scientific Knowledge and Demographics

Model	b	Std. Error	t
(Constant)	2.188	.146	15.019
South	.481	.081	5.956
Some College	-.323	.078	-4.132
Female	-.254	.076	-3.334
African American	.330	.115	2.874
Gay/Bisexual	-1.208	.229	-5.268
Married	.283	.078	3.635
Age of Respondent	.018	.002	8.209
Scientific Errors	.125	.024	5.184

Adjusted R Square: .167
n= 1333

Table 3.5 General Intolerance and Demographics

Model	b	Std. Error	t
(Constant)	1.852	.148	12.503
South	.447	.079	5.663
Some College	-.149	.080	-1.873
Female	-.310	.075	-4.147
African American	.302	.112	2.698
Gay/Bisexual	-1.129	.224	-5.033
Married	.278	.076	3.656
Age of Respondent	.016	.002	7.335
Mean Intolerance	.464	.049	9.546

Adjusted R square: .204
n= 1333

Table 3.6 Homosexual Intolerance and Demographics

Model	b	Std. Error	t
(Constant)	2.245	.133	16.914
South	.404	.077	5.261
Some College	-.143	.075	-1.896
Female	-.263	.072	-3.641
African American	.317	.108	2.933
Gay/Bisexual	-1.34	.218	-5.211
Married	.282	.074	3.822
Age of Respondent	.013	.002	6.090
Homosexual Intolerance	.503	.038	13.324

Adjusted R square: .250
n= 1333

Table 3.7 Composite Model

Model	b	Std. Error	t
(Constant)	1.462	.150	9.770
South	.256	.075	3.433
Some College	-.027	.075	-.367
Female	-.313	.070	-4.497
African American	.439	.110	3.990
Gay/Bisexual	-.977	.206	-4.749
Married	.211	.071	2.981
Age of Respondent	.014	.002	6.738
Mean Intolerance	.133	.052	2.573
Homosexual Intolerance	.363	.040	8.955
Political Party Aff.	.157	.018	8.753
Born-Again Christian	.489	.077	6.330
Scientific Errors	.069	.022	3.076

Adjusted R Square: .335
n= 1297

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