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Jordan Stein April 10, 2012

The Pieces of a Changing Social Puzzle:

Socio-Demographic Influences on American Attitudes Toward Gay Marriage

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Abstract

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In this honors thesis I examine the extent to which various socio-demographic factors influence American attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Using the 2010 General Social Survey, a nationally representative sample of adults in the United States, I quantify the effects of sex, race, age, educational attainment, political ideology, frequency of religious service attendance, religious preference, and total household income. My results largely replicate past research. In a final ordinary least squares regression analysis, political ideology, frequency of religious service attendance, age, educational attainment, race, sex, and total household income are found to be the strongest predictors of gay marriage attitude, in that order. The implications of the findings for social science and social policy are discussed.

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Introduction

In February of 2004, President George W. Bush called on the United States Congress to ratify a constitutional amendment that would "define and protect marriage as the union of a man and woman as husband and wife" (Bush 2004). President Bush's pursuit of this amendment reflects the rapidly escalating role that social and cultural issues, namely same-sex marriage, have come to play in 21st century politics and public discourse. Despite its recent appearance in contemporary debates, the institution of same-sex union and same-sex relationships in general have been a part of society for centuries, dating back to ancient times. The domestic and international prominence of same-sex marriage in recent history lends itself to an examination of public opinion and attitudes on the issue. In this honors thesis I will explore American attitudes toward same-sex marriage in an effort to determine the influence of socio-demographic factors such as gender, race, age, education, political persuasion, religious beliefs, and others.

In 1989, Denmark became the first nation to legally acknowledge same-sex partnerships, stopping short of legalizing same-sex marriage. This relatively momentous victory for the global gay civil rights movement represents a radical departure from earlier legal precedent. For example, prior to the 1970s, Canada deemed homosexuality a criminal act in Canada, as it remains to this day in multiple other nations (Canadian Broadcast Company 2009). Within the United States, it was not until 1961 that Illinois became the first state to repeal its sodomy laws, making it the first U.S. state to decriminalize homosexual relations between consensual adults in private (Pew Forum 2010). In the ensuing decade a number of states, beginning with Connecticut, followed suit (Canadian Broadcast Company 2009). Eventually, in 2001, as a result of a vote of the Lower House of Dutch parliament, the Netherlands became the first nation in the world to confer and recognize same-sex marriages bearing the entire slate of rights and

privileges granted to heterosexual married couples. Additionally, this legislative package granted Dutch same-sex married couples the same rights for child adoption as heterosexual married couples (Canadian Broadcast Company 2009).

These political and legal victories have accumulated despite fierce, emotionally charged, and at times violent opposition to gay rights. Indeed, the American gay civil rights movement is often thought to have symbolically begun with the violent 1969 Stonewall Riots in Greenwich Village of New York City (Carter 2004: 257). New York City police raided the Stonewall Inn, a private gay club, and guests at the club rioted and fought back against the police aggression. Police raids of this sort on predominately gay establishments were anything but uncommon at this point in history, but the resistance at Stonewall was unprecedented.

Much of the resistance to condoning same-sex marriage seems linked in one way or another to religion. On July 31, 2003, the Vatican released a 12-page set of guidelines, with the blessing of Pope John Paul, fighting against gay marriage. In this decree, the Vatican issued a warning to Catholic politicians of the explicit immorality of same-sex unions. As the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith stated, "Marriage is holy, while homosexual acts go against the natural moral law ... Legal recognition of homosexual unions or placing them on the same level as marriage would mean not only the approval of deviant behavior ... but would also obscure basic values which belong to the common inheritance of humanity" (cited in CNN 2003). These pointed statements speak to the overt religious invocations that are consistently injected into the same-sex marriage debate both within America and on a global scale.

Shortly after the Vatican's statements were publicized, in August of 2004, American voters in the state of Missouri voted overwhelmingly to ban same-sex marriages and strictly define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Seventy-two percent of Missouri

voters cast ballots for this measure (Jost 2008: 780). This crushing defeat for the gay civil rights movement made Missouri the first state to ban gay marriage. Eleven additional states joined Missouri in opposition to gay marriage in November of 2004, and nine more followed suit by 2007 (National Public Radio 2012). As of 2012, 42 American states define marriage in explicitly heterosexual terms in their state constitution, three states have no codified same-sex marriage legislation, and 13 allow civil unions or domestic partnerships – unions that come with many rights associated with marriage (Rapoport 2012).

At the present time, ten nations across the world have legalized the institution of same-sex marriage: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, and Sweden. In America, the first same-sex marriage licenses were given to couples in Massachusetts, after a May 2004 state Supreme Court ruling struck down the state's previously existing gay marriage ban (Canadian Broadcast Company 2009). Currently, six American states – Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, as well as the District of Columbia grant same-sex couples the right to marry (Rapoport 2012). The states of Washington and Maryland have passed legislation which would allow for same-sex marriage licenses starting in 2012, but the legislation may be overturned or delayed by November 2012 voter ballot initiatives (Rapoport 2012).

With respect to current attitudes and public opinion, recent data suggest that American views on same-sex marriage are becoming increasingly more progressive over the course of time. In April of 2011 four polls, all of which were conducted by credible organizations, found a majority of Americans to be in favor of same-sex marriage. In one CNN/Opinion Research poll 51 percent of respondents said that gay marriages "should be recognized by the law as valid," with 47 percent opposed (Silver 2011). The four 2011 polls are the first credible polls in

American history to cite majority support for the cause (Silver 2011). The apparent trends in American attitudes on this issue require us to assess the causes and nature of the shifts. Many 21st century political candidates and elected officials, namely conservative members of the Republican Party, have used anti-gay marriage policy positions to rally support of religiously motivated voters and divide the electorate. With a majority of Americans now seemingly in support of gay marriage rights, candidates staking their political fortunes on a religious conservative platform may find it useful to critically reevaluate their approach.

In this honors thesis, I will examine the current state of public opinion on the subject of same-sex marriage in the United States. Using data collected for the 2010 General Social Survey (GSS), I will evaluate which social, economic, and lifestyle-based factors are most salient to Americans' positions on same-sex marriage (National Opinion Research Center 2012). Additionally, I will look to see if the results of previous studies are replicated by the 2010 GSS data. The results of my analysis will have tremendous implications for politics and society in general, as the growing acceptance of gay marriage represents a marked cultural shift on a truly salient issue of domestic and international relevance.

Before presenting my analysis of the 2010 GSS data, I review previous research that is relevant to the present study. I then describe my data and methods more fully, followed by the analysis, which in this thesis includes a series of cross-tabulations and regression results. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of the findings for policy and future research.

Literature Review

Context

Although same-sex marriage has become a highly contentious and emotionally charged public issue only during recent decades, in reality, a careful examination shows that the practice dates back several centuries. Despite movements by many conservative political leaders and groups to formally ban same sex marriages, by many objective accounts, world history shows that same-sex marriages and other related practices substantially predate efforts to ban it from American society. To put this idea into a general perspective, the American Anthropological Association released the following statement in response to President George W. Bush's 2004 call for a national constitutional amendment prohibiting same sex marriages:

> The results of more than a century of anthropological research on households, kinship relationships, and families, across cultures and through time, provide no support whatsoever for the view that either civilization or viable social orders depend upon marriage as an exclusively heterosexual institution. Rather, anthropological research supports the conclusion that vast array of family types, including families built upon same-sex partnerships, can contribute to stable and humane societies (AAA 2007).

Historical Precedents

In autumn of 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled that the state had no legal grounds to infringe upon same-sex couples' right to marry (Cunningham 2005: 21). In the majority opinion, the court stated, "Since pre-colonial days civil marriage has been a secular institution with no religious requirement attached" (Cunningham 2005: 20). The court continued by contending that opposition to same-sex marriage, in its opinion, is not rooted in rationality,

but rather a mere prejudice toward homosexuals (Cunningham 2005: 22). Despite intense outrage from religious and church-based groups in Massachusetts and throughout the nation, the state court ruling primes us for a discussion of historical appearances of same-sex relationships and unions.

In his article, "A History of Same Sex Marriage," William V. Eskridge Jr. (1993) discusses a wide array of historical manifestations of same sex relationships, marriages, and unions. One of the key societies that Eskridge examines is the Native American community. Eskridge notably discusses the concept of *berdache*, or males who dress in female clothing and may marry other men (Eskridge 1993: 1419). In the 19th century, We'Wha, a leader in the Zuni Southwestern Native American community was a berdache. Contrary to the modern stigmas and socially constructed beliefs about those who dress and act in this manner, We'Wha was not ostracized from society or looked down upon through cultural, social, or religious lenses. In fact, he served as an "emissary" to American governmental leadership on behalf of his Native American tribal community (Eskridge 1993: 1419).

Further evidence of the presence of same sex relationships being a part of mainstream Native American culture has been gleaned from analysis of written accounts of Spanish missionaries and explorers. In a blunt, yet poignant statement in his *History of the Indies,* Francisco Lopez de Gomara states, "The men marry other men who are impotent or castrated and go around like women, perform[ing] their duties" (cited in Eskridge 1993: 1453). Although the account provided by Gomara seems to paint the same-sex behavior he observed as out of the mainstream and socially unacceptable, these behaviors were in the norm in many Native American societies.

Several of the early to pre-modern societies are looked at as forerunners in the development of Western culture. Two such societies, early Egypt and Mesopotamia, allowed and acknowledged same-sex marriage in both cultural and mythological contexts. Anthropologists have observed art depicting two males in intimate poses, holding hands, and engaging in other related behaviors (Eskridge 1993: 1437). Although inferential, this observation suggests that same-sex relationships were not out of the mainstream in these societies.

On a more direct level, evidence of same-sex marriage is present from the aforementioned societies in written religious texts. As is well documented, the Israelites, as a tribal group, fled Egypt en route to Canaan. The book of Leviticus, one of the sacred, holy books of the Israelites states, "You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt." More directly, the book of Leviticus states, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as womankind: it is abomination" (cited in Eskridge 1993: 1438). This reflects the widely promulgated Judeo-Christian stance against same- sex marriage, but also reflects the notion that the Egyptians condoned, allowed, and perpetuated this institution.

In classical Greece and Pre-Christian Rome, two societies marked by great literature and written communication, a prominent writer and thinker discussed the notion of love in such a way that reveals a tolerance for same sex relationships. In *Plato's Symposium,* Phaedus contends, "Love will make men dare to die for their beloved, and women as well as men" (cited in Eskridge 1993: 1442). This discussion comes in the context of Achilles, a man partially known for his social masculinity and strength, possessing a willingness to die for his male lover Patroclus. A prominent social thinker and commentator defending a man's right to love another

man stands in stark contrast to modern American social norms, and is reflective of the presence of these relationships in classical Greek society and ancient times in general.

The rhetoric employed by religious and culturally conservative leaders seems to be contradicted by much of the aforementioned historical examples. When advocates of anti-gay marriage legislation deliver remarks they consistently suggest that allowing for same-sex marriage would threaten centuries of tradition. Rarely, if ever, has the 21st century dialogue on same-sex marriage included invocations of these historical precedents. In calling for an amendment defining marriage as a union between a man and a woman, President Bush and his allies felt that same-sex marriage would weaken the institution in general. In the fourth century, however, Sergius and Bacchus, two valiant Roman soldiers who embodied strength and masculinity were male lovers. Their relationship was considered to be the epitome of a strong marriage, embodying true love and mutual respect (Eskridge 1993: 1420).

Public Opinion towards Gay Marriage in a Political and Electoral Context

Within the realm of media and modern culture, the issue of gay marriage has consistently been framed through two lenses: an equality and tolerance perspective, and a morality perspective (Baunach 2011: 348). The equality and tolerance perspective, often used by marriage equality activists, articulates the issue as one of civil rights and fairness. This school of thought states that individuals should not be deprived of full and equal marriage rights and recognition because of their sexual orientation. The morality perspective, typically advanced by opponents of gay marriage rights, paints marriage equality as anathema to the sanctity of values that mainstream religions preach and as having harmful consequences for society in general. These dueling perspectives have ultimately evolved in response to one another, and serve as the rhetorical basis for virtually all current discourse on the issue at hand.

In analyzing factors impacting attitudes of Americans towards same-sex marriage, Lee and Hicks (2011: 1395) found that "supporters of same-sex marriage tend to be liberal, less religious, female, and white." In examining the various socio-demographic factors that may play roles in impacting attitudes on gay marriage, religion is one of the most compelling and nuanced elements to explore. On a very basic level in America, "religious congregations are highly cohesive political communities that exert a substantial influence on their members" (Schwartz 2010: 752). The 1996 Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), signed into law by President Bill Clinton, banned federal acknowledgement of same-sex marriages and permitted individual states to come to their own judgments on whether to recognize them (Burnett and Salka 2008: 1076). In February of 2011, President Barack Obama announced that his administration's Department of Justice would no longer defend the DOMA in court, as they believed it to be unconstitutional (Rapoport 2012). In response to the Obama administration's statement, Timothy Dolan, the head of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (UCCB) authored a letter to the President expressing tremendous disapproval. The New York based Dolan's argument was replete with language and arguments embodying the aforementioned morality frame for same-sex marriage. For example, Dolan argued that same-sex marriage "undermines" the family and poses a threat to "human dignity and humanity itself" (cited in Rapoport 2012).

In direct response to the 2003 Goodridge v. Department of Public Health case in the Massachusetts Supreme Court, the UCCB issued a statement saying "Christians must give witness to the whole moral truth and oppose as immoral … homosexual acts" (cited in Cunningham 2005: 1430). The UCCB later published a statement saying the "natural structure of human sexuality can only be expressed between man and woman" (cited in Cunningham 2005: 1432). With the fierce rhetoric of the UCCB in mind, and the general finding of Lee and

Hicks (2010) that less religious individuals are more likely to be supporters of marriage equality, it is no surprise that political campaigns of socially conservative candidates may exploit the issue for electoral gain. In the heated 2004 presidential election between Republican incumbent George W. Bush and Democratic challenger John Kerry, 13 states had ballot items on election day on whether state constitutions should effectively ban gay marriage (Campbell and Monson 2008: 12). Campbell and Monson's analysis demonstrates that the Republican Party pushed gay marriage as a critical issue with a demographic group paramount to its base: white evangelical Protestants. Analysis of exit polls shows in states with gay marriage ballot items up for a vote in 2004, white evangelical Protestants exhibited significantly higher turnout for President Bush than in other states or as compared to other elections (Campbell and Monson 2008: 16). Campbell and Monson explain how secular identifiers were demobilized in these same states, demonstrating lower voter turnout, and not necessarily showing high levels of support for Senator Kerry (Campbell and Monson 2008: 18). These results lend credence to what many believe to be a notable trend in 21st century politics: the Republican Party organizing and mobilizing its key bases of voters around opposition to gay marriage.

In testing whether the tactical strategy of the Republican Party in 2004 was an isolated occurrence or indicative of a larger trend, Burnett and Salka (2008) linked 2006 votes on amendments to ban gay marriage with 2004 votes for President Bush. In November 2006, seven states passed amendments that effectively outlawed gay marriage. Burnett and Salka used "county-wide votes on gay marriage bans" as the dependent variable in their study, and ultimately found that the population casting votes for President Bush in 2004 was correlated with the population supporting the anti-gay marriage ballot items at a statistically significant level in six of the seven states that passed anti-marriage equality amendments (Burnett and Salka 2008:

1076). Burnett and Salka also found that socioeconomic status was a statistically significant factor linked to these votes. With respect to Burnett and Salka's dependent variable, counties with higher socioeconomic statuses were less likely to support the gay marriage bans. Democrats and higher income voters were also found to be less likely to support the bans. Income trumped party in Burnett and Salka's analysis, as voters with higher incomes were less likely to support the ban amendments regardless of party identification (Burnett and Salka 2008: 1074-1076).

Public Opinion towards Gay Marriage in a Demographic Context

The Gallup polling organization began asking Americans about their attitudes toward same-sex marriage as part of their values survey in 1996, and for the first time, in May 2011 a majority of Americans believe that same-sex marriages should be acknowledged as valid and should carry the same rights as heterosexual marriages (Gallup Politics 2011). The issue of homosexual marriage is a rapidly evolving one, as 68% of Americans were opposed in 1996, while only 45% were opposed in 2011. The ten-point increase in support for gay marriage from 2010 from 2011 was the largest year to year increase in the poll's history (Gallup Politics 2011). Baunach (2011) suggests that the U.S. Supreme Court striking down federal sodomy laws in 2003 may have taken away the legal credence in viewing homosexuality as immoral and deviant (347). Baunach argues that when searching for the roots of the evolving views on gay marriage, two possible types of attitudinal change may be at play. Intracohort change entails individuals within a particular social or demographic group changing attitude on the issue over a period of time. Conversely, cohort succession describes younger generations literally replacing older ones, which are phased out of society (Baunach 2011: 349).

Unlike many other nations which have come to national resolutions on the issue of same-sex marriage, Fish (2005) contends that even though "positive public opinion seems to be on the rise" in America, the gay marriage debate remains highly fragmented among states (13). Baunach (2011) concludes that intracohort change is the reason for nearly two-thirds of the shift in attitudes toward gay marriage (356). While younger generations are unquestionably more socially liberal in their views on the issue, Baunach's study demonstrates that individuals are in fact changing their attitudes as time progresses. Although to dramatically varying degrees, Baunach found that most groups, including Evangelical Protestants, moderated their views on gay marriage during the period from 1988-2006. This apparent liberalization was not observed, however, among African Americans and Republicans (Baunach 2011: 359).

Much of the literature on the topic of attitudes toward same-sex marriage implies that marriage equality activists would make best use of their time and resources by focusing on winning over key demographic groups. Schwartz (2010) suggests "gay rights activists who want civil rights have to focus on people who consistently attend religious services" (750). The hypothesis that those who attend services most frequently are more prone to being opposed to same-sex marriage rights is empirically supported by Baunach (2011).

Methods and Procedures

In order to analyze current trends in public opinion on gay marriage, I will make use of the most recently compiled and publicly available version of the General Social Survey (GSS), the 2010 version. The GSS, a project of the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), is the most widely utilized source for quantitative data analysis in the social sciences in America, second only to the U.S. Census. The GSS is administered to a randomly selected sample of

adults aged 18 and over, and constitutes a representative sample of Americans. The GSS is unique from other survey data due to the fact that it is a full-probability survey administered via face-to-face, in-person interviews. This sampling technique carries a high level of credibility, and is the prime reason that the GSS is so highly regarded (National Opinion Research Center 2012).

The University of Chicago-based NORC first collected the GSS in 1972. From 1972-1994, the GSS was produced on an annual basis. Beginning in 1994, the survey has been published every other year. As described by the NORC, the GSS contains data on "societal trends" and "social change" (National Opinion Research Center 2012). The items within the GSS collect information on demographics such as race, religion, and ethnicity, while also taking stock of respondents' attitudes and beliefs on issues such as government spending, political ideology, social mobility, and other sociopolitical matters. Due to the fact that demographic and attitudinal data are collected from so many respondents, analysis of the GSS allows us to link beliefs with individuals of certain economic, social, and political groups.

To analyze and deconstruct the most recent trends in public opinion on gay marriage, I will use the GSS item "MARHOMO," a question asking respondents to react to the statement: "Homosexual Couples Should Have the Right to Marry One Another." Respondents are able to "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neither Agree nor Disagree," "Disagree," "Strongly Disagree," or state that they "Can't Choose." As a result of these possible response categories, "MARHOMO" can be classified as an ordinal variable. This item will serve as the dependent variable in my analysis. For the sake of simplicity and more clearly illuminating directional trends within a cross-tabulation framework, I will create a new variable, which will collapse several of the response categories of "MARHOMO." The newly coded variable will allow for three response

categories to the statement, "Homosexual Couples Should Have the Right to Marry One Another": "Agree" (all those who answered "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" on "MARHOMO"), "Disagree" (all those who answered "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" on "MARHOMO"), and "Neither Agree nor Disagree" (identical to the same response field on "MARHOMO").

First, I will provide general frequency distributions of the dependent variable, which will illustrate the general attitudes of 2010 GSS respondents toward same-sex marriage. Then, using cross-tabulation, I will assess the association between several different independent variables and my recoded version of MARHOMO. These independent variables will include sex, race, age, educational attainment measured by highest degree earned, political ideology, frequency of religious service attendance, religious preference, and total household income. When analyzing the associations between the aforementioned independent variables and attitude toward gay marriage, I will focus my discussion around the pattern, strength, and significance of the relationships exhibited.

My theoretical expectations concerning these independent variables are outlined below:

Hypothesis 1: Females will show greater acceptance than males of gay marriage (Lee and Hicks 2011: 1400).

Hypothesis 2: Whites will show greater acceptance than blacks of gay marriage (Smith and Harris 2005: 13).

Hypothesis 3: Liberals will show greater acceptance than moderates or conservatives of gay marriage (Brewer 2008: 23).

Hypothesis 4: Young people will show greater acceptance than older people of gay marriage (Baunach 2011: 355).

Hypothesis 5: More highly educated individuals will show greater acceptance than less educated people toward gay marriage (Brewer 2011: 31).

Hypothesis 6: Those who attend religious services more often will show less acceptance toward gay marriage (Baunach 2011: 356).

Hypothesis 7: Protestants will show less acceptance of gay marriage than other religious groups,

such as Catholics and Jews (Simon and Brooks 2009: 35).

Hypothesis 8: Individuals earning more income will show greater acceptance of gay marriage than those earning less income (Brewer 2008: 47).

Analysis

As previously stated, the GSS item "MARHOMO" asks respondents for their attitudes on the statement: "Homosexual Couples Should Have the Right to Marry One Another." Table 1 below shows the unweighted frequency distribution for the unmodified "MARHOMO" variable, as tabulated in the 2010 GSS.

Table 1 – Frequency Distribution for Dependent Variable: Attitude Toward Gay Marriage

(N=1,262, Unweighted)

Response Category	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Strongly Agree	270	21.4%
Agree	316	25.0%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	167	13.2%
Disagree	191	15.1%
Strongly Disagree	318	25.2%
TOTAL	1,262	100%

*Note that the GSS posed this question to a subset of respondents, giving us up to 1,262 unweighted cases in the following analysis, before missing values.

The GSS is equipped with several different weight variables to compensate for factors that may undermine the representativeness of the sample collected (National Opinion Research Center 2012). I will use the weight variable "WTSSNR," which is designed to weight variables to account for the occurrence of nonresponses and is the recommended weight variable according to the National Opinion Research Center (National Opinion Research Center 2012). In addition, once the GSS interviews one adult in a given household, all other adults in the same household are ruled out of consideration for random selection. This aspect of the selection process impacts the GSS' status as a representative sample and is accounted for by employing a weight variable. Table 2 below shows the frequency distribution on "MARHOMO" weighted with "WTSSNR."

Table 2 – Frequency Distribution for Dependent Variable: Attitude Toward Gay Marriage

(N=1,259, weighted using "WTSSNR")

Response Category	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Strongly Agree	273	21.7%
Agree	317	25.2%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	164	13.1%
Disagree	196	15.6%
Strongly Disagree	308	24.4%
TOTAL	1,259	100%

When comparing the unweighted and weighted frequency distributions on "MARHOMO," the percentage of respondents in each response category differs by 0.5% or less, if at all between the two distributions. In the interest of the most representative and generalizable results possible, I will weight the sample in my analysis using "WTSSNR," even though the above tables and separate analyses (not shown) suggest very little to no difference between the weighted and unweighted versions.

For the purposes of my analysis, as previously stated, I will create a new variable taking the same attitudinal measure as "MARHOMO." The new variable combines the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses and the "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree" responses. Table 3 below displays a frequency distribution for this variable.

Table 3 - Frequency Distribution for Dependent Variable: Attitude Toward Gay Marriage

(N=1,259, weighted using "WTSNNR")

Response Category	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Agree	591	46.9%
Neither Agree nor Disagree	164	13.1%
Disagree	504	40.0%
TOTAL	1,259	100%

In the above frequency distribution, it can be seen that 46.9% of respondents agree that same-sex couples should have the right to marry one another, 40% disagree, and 13.1% neither agree nor disagree.

Independent Variables and Cross-Tabulations

In order to assess the association that selected economic, social, and political factors have with an individual's attitude toward gay marriage, I will introduce several independent variables. As previously stated, I will then conduct cross-tabulations between these independent variables and the dependent variable to gauge the pattern, strength, and significance of the various associations. Table 4 below (page 19) shows weighted univariate frequency distributions for each of the independent variables which will be examined in subsequent cross-tabulations. As shown in Table 4, slightly over half the sample is female; about three-fourths of the sample is white; roughly 60% of the sample are over age 40, and roughly 35% have at least a college degree. In terms of political ideology, the sample is fairly normally distributed around "moderate;" about 30% attend religious services at least weekly; about half is Protestant, and about 43% has over $60,000 in annual household income. Following Table 4, Table 5 depicts the results of the bivariate cross-tabulations, which are explained more fully in the following pages.

Table 4: Weighted Frequency Distributions for all Independent Variables in the Analysis

Variable	Number	Percent
SEX		
Male	597	47.4%
Female	663	52.6%
RACE White	972	77.3%
Black	168	13.4%
Other	118	9.4%
AGE		
18-30	249	19.8%
31-40	241	19.2%
41-50	255	20.3%
51-61	251	20%
62 and older	261	20.8%
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT		
Less than High School	179	14.2%
High School	631	50.2%
Associate or Bachelor's	309	24.6%
Graduate School	139	11%
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY		
Liberal	349	28.7%
Moderate	469	38.5%
Conservative	400	32.8%
RELIGIOUS SERVICE ATTENDANCE		
Less than Monthly	600	54.9%
Monthly to 2-3 times per Month	200	15.9%
Weekly	274	21.8%
Multiple Times per Week	93	7.4%
RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE		
Protestant	587	46.7%
Catholic	318	25.3%
Jewish	30	2.4%
None	221	17.6%
Other	100	8%
TOTAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME		
Under $25,000	309	27.6%
$25,000-$59,999	328	29.3%
Over $60,000	483	43.1%

Table 5: Associations Between Gay Marriage Attitude and Selected Independent Variables

Independent Variable	Attitude Towards Gay Marriage			P-Value
	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	
SEX				
Male	42.4%	11.9%	45.7%	
Female	51%	14.2%	34.8%	<.000
RACE				
White	48.5%	11.6%	39.9%	
Black	36.9%	14.3%	48.8%	
Other	49.2%	22.9%	28%	<.000
AGE				
18-30	65.5%	18.5%	16.1%	
31-40	49.4%	16.2%	34.4%	
41-50	42.7%	13.7%	43.5%	
51-61	42.6%	6%	51.4%	
62+	34.9%	11.5%	53.6%	<.000
EDUCATION				
Less than high school	34.1%	14.5%	51.4%	
High School	45.3%	14.6%	40.1%	
Associate or Bachelor's Degree	51.5%	11.0%	37.5%	
Graduate School	60.4%	8.6%	30.9%	<.000
POLITICAL IDEOLOGY				
Liberal	70.5%	10.9%	18.6%	
Moderate	48.4%	16.6%	35%	
Conservative	25.3%	10.8%	64%	<.000
RELIGIOUS SERVICE ATTENDANCE				
Less than Monthly	59.9%	13.2%	27%	
Monthly to 2-3 times per month	44%	12.5%	43.5%	
Weekly	26.6%	14.6%	58.8%	
Multiple times per week	17.2%	8.6%	74.2%	<.000
RELIGIOUS PREFERENCE				
Protestant	35.6%	11.1%	53.3%	
Catholic	47.8%	16.7%	35.5%	
Jewish	70%	16.7%	13.3%	
None	69.2%	12.2%	18.6%	
Other	53%	15%	32%	<.000
HOUSEHOLD INCOME				
Under $25,000	45.3%	15.5%	39.2%	
$25,000 - $59,999	44.5%	15.5%	39.9%	
Over $60,000	50.9%	9.1%	40%	.368

Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Gender

Gender is arguably the most basic demographic characteristic by which public opinion can be dissected. Gender is measured in the GSS by the variable "SEX." The item allows for two response fields: "male" or "female."

The results of the weighted cross-tabulation shown in Table 5 allow us to examine the pattern, strength, and significance of the association between attitude on same-sex marriage and gender. With respect to pattern, females are more accepting of the notion of homosexual couples having marriage rights. Fifty-one percent of women, compared with 42.4% of men, agree with the statement, "Homosexual couples should have the right to marry one another." Almost forty-six percent of males interviewed disagreed, while only 34.8% of females answered in the negative. In summary, females were more agreeable to legalizing same-sex marriage than males. The statistical quantity of gamma serves as a test for the strength of the association between two variables in a cross-tabulation. The absolute value of the gamma statistic generated from this association (.180) suggests a weak effect of sex on gay marriage attitude.[1] Over the long run, if we know a respondents' sex, we reduce our error in predicting attitude on gay marriage by 18%. The association between these two variables is statistically significant at an alpha level of .05, as the z-test of gamma produces a p-value less than .000. This leads us to reject the null hypothesis that gamma=0 in the larger population. In sum, sex is a weak but statistically significant predictor of attitude on gay marriage.

[1] In this thesis, the strength of an association will be evaluated using the following cut-points for proportional-reduction-in-error measures such as gamma: 0-.2=weak; .2-.5=moderate; and .5-1.00 = strong.

Cross-Tabulation Between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Race

Next, I will assess the association between attitudes on giving marriage rights to homosexual couples and one's race (see Table 5). The GSS variable "RACE" allows for responses of "White," "Black," and "Other" for a respondent's self-identified racial classification.

Given the prominence of race in politics, history, and community relations, it is worthwhile to ascertain whether a difference exists in attitudes toward same-sex marriage from one racial group to another, particularly between the black and white communities in America. The weighted cross-tabulation results in Table 5 break down attitudes on same-sex marriage rights by respondents' racial identities.

The cross-tabulation shows that "Whites" and "Others" expressed more agreement with homosexual couples having the right to marry one another than black Americans. Roughly 49% of both "Whites" and "Others" agree with legally allowing same-sex marriage, while only 36.9% of blacks similarly agreed. Along the same lines, blacks exhibited the most disagreement to making same-sex marriage legal of the three racial groups. Almost forty-nine percent of black respondents disagreed, while only 39.9% of whites and 28% of other races voiced this attitude.

Due to the fact that the GSS race variable is a nominal one with at least three response categories, I will interpret the lambda statistic for the cross-tabulation to assess the strength of the association between attitude on same-sex marriage and race. The lambda value with gay marriage attitude dependent is .030. This suggests a weak level of association between the two variables. The proportional reduction in error due to race is .030. Over the long run, if we know the race of respondents, we reduce our error in predicting their attitude toward gay marriage by only 3%. As race is a nominal variable, the Pearson's Chi-Square statistic is the most

appropriate way to assess the statistical significance of this association. The Pearson Chi-Square statistic for the association between attitude on same-sex marriage and race is 22.194. A significance test of this chi-square statistic produces a p-value less than .000. We reject the null hypothesis that no population association exists between the two variables, and conclude that the association is statistically significant at the alpha level of .05. Like sex, however, race is a weak predictor, with the black racial category being less approving than the rest of the sample.

Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Age

An analysis of the association between age and attitude toward same-sex marriage will help shed light on whether the previously cited polls reflecting increasing acceptance of same-sex marriage rights on a national level are indicative of younger generations' increased tolerance for the institution. The GSS "AGE" variable is an interval-ratio level item with over 60 different response categories. To streamline my analysis, I have collapsed and recoded the variable into a new one. The responses to the original "AGE" variable were put into the following ordinal categories: 18-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-61, and 62 and older.

When looking at the results of the weighted cross-tabulation between attitude on gay marriage and age, a clear pattern emerges. With each ascending age bracket, individuals are less supportive of gay marriage rights. This trend is consistent with each age group in the data. When we compare the youngest and oldest age categories, the differences are striking. Roughly two-thirds of 18-30 year olds endorse gay marriage, compared to roughly only one-third of individuals of ages 65 and up. Similarly, disagreement with gay marriage rights increases with each older age group. The gamma statistic of .293 for the association between these two ordinal variables indicates a moderate association. If we are aware of age, we can reduce our error in

predicting attitude on gay marriage by 29.3%. Finally, the association is statistically significant at the .05 alpha level. A z-test of gamma yields a p-value less than .000, prompting us to reject the null hypothesis that the population value of gamma is zero.

Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Educational Attainment

In the context of deconstructing public opinion there is often discussion as to whether an individual's educational attainment or experience impacts his or her attitudes and worldview. It is thought that education and pro-gay marriage attitudes are positively related (Brewer 2008: 31). Focusing on an individual's level of educational attainment provides a perspective unique from the other independent variables included in my analysis. Rather than looking at years spent in an educational setting, I have chosen to use a GSS variable measuring the highest degree an individual has earned, a less subjective and more meritocratic measure to gauge educational attainment. For the sake of simpler analysis, I have condensed the 2010 GSS variable "DEGREE" into a new variable. The categories of the new variable, as displayed in Table 4 are: "less than high school," "high school," "associate or bacheolor's degree," and "graduate" work.

The pattern observed in the weighted cross-tabulation reflects the fact that agreement with same-sex marriage rights consistently increases as an individual's educational attainment, measured by degree earned increases. In following with this pattern, disagreement with same-sex marriage decreases as educational attainment rises. The absolute value of the gamma statistic, .182 renders this association a weak one. If we know the category of educational attainment, as measured by highest degree earned, we reduce our error in predicting attitude toward gay marriage by 18.2%. Despite the weak strength, this association is statistically significant at the .05 alpha level given a p-value less than .000 from the z-test of gamma. We

reject the null hypothesis that the population value of gamma is zero.

Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Political Ideology

Given the prominence that the issue of same-sex marriage has taken on in political contexts in recent years, it is valuable to see what type of association exists between individuals' political views and their attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The 2010 GSS measures political views via the variable "POLVIEWS." This variable gives respondents the opportunity to classify themselves on a continuum ranging from "Extremely Liberal" to "Extremely Conservative." For the sake of simplicity, I have created a new, collapsed version of this variable, which recodes the response categories of "POLVIEWS" into three simple fields: "Liberal," "Moderate," and "Conservative." All respondents who characterized themselves as "Extremely Liberal," "Liberal," or "Slightly Liberal" will be considered "Liberal" for the purposes of my analysis. The same procedure was followed for conservative respondents.

As far as pattern is concerned, the cross-tabulation results in Table 5 clearly show liberals to be more accepting of gay marriage rights than moderates or conservatives. Approximately 70% of liberals endorse gay marriage, compared to 48% and 25% of moderates and conservatives, respectively. As both of the variables involved in this cross-tabulation are ordinal, we look to gamma to assess the strength of the association. The gamma statistic for this cross-tabulation is .528, reflecting a strong association between one's attitude toward gay marriage and the same individual's political ideology. Interpreting gamma as a proportional reduction in error measure, if we know respondents' political views, we reduce our error in predicting attitude toward same-sex marriage by 52.8%. The association between these two variables is statistically significant at an alpha level of .05, as the z-test of gamma produces a p-value less than .000. We

reject the null hypothesis than the population value of gamma is equal to zero. In summary, political ideology is a strong and statistically significant predictor of attitude toward gay marriage.

Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Religious Service Attendance

As discussed in the introduction, much of the modern public opposition to marriage rights for same-sex couples is rooted in religion to one extent or another. It is often inferred that individuals who are more engaged in their religious practice may be more likely to exhibit socially conservative attitudes on issues such as same-sex marriage. One credible way to measure an individual's engagement with his or her religion is through his or her consistency of attendance to religious services. The 2010 GSS variable "ATTEND" measures "How often [a respondent] attends religious services." Respondents are able to choose response categories ranging from "Never" to "Several times a week," with seven possibilities in between. To streamline my analysis, I have created a new, condensed variable. The new variable compresses the response categories for "ATTEND" from nine to four.

The results of the weighted cross-tabulation shown in Table 5 show that the individuals in this sample who attend religious services most often are the ones who disagree with gay marriage rights most and agree with them least. The gamma statistic of .475 is indicative of a moderate strength of association. If we know how often respondents attend religious services, we reduce our error in predicting their attitude toward gay marriage by 47.5%. The association between religious service attendance and gay marriage attitude is statistically significant at the .05 alpha level, as the z-test of gamma produces a p-value less than .000. Accordingly, we reject the null hypothesis that the population value of gamma is zero.

Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Religious Preference

Although I have incorporated religion into my analysis by way of considering frequency of attendance at services, it is worth investigating whether one or more of the most common religions in America tend to be associated more than others with particular attitudes toward gay marriage. The 2010 GSS variable "RELIG" asks respondents to identify with one of several religions: "Protestant," "Catholic," "Jewish," "None," or one of many "Other[s]." I have created a new variable, which classifies all of religions other than Protestantism, Catholicism, Judaism, and atheism under the umbrella of "Other." The reader can refer back to Table 4 to see the subsample sizes for these groups.

Since religion is a nominal variable, we cannot see an ascending or descending pattern in the same way we have been able to for the other independent variables included in the analysis. Jews have the highest level of agreement with gay marriage rights in the sample (70%), while Protestants have the lowest agreement (35.6%) and highest level of disagreement (53.3%) of the religions included. Given the nominal nature of religion, we look to the lambda statistic with same-sex marriage attitude dependent to shed light on the strength of the association. In this case, lamda shows a weak association. If we know respondents' religious preferences, we reduce the error in predicting their attitudes on gay marriage by 15.6%. Pearson's Chi-Square statistic is 109.321 for this association. A significance test of this chi-square statistic produces a p-value less than .000. We reject the null hypothesis that no population association exists between the two variables and conclude that the association is statistically significant at the .05 alpha level.

Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Total Household Income

Income is one of the many stratifying factors in American society, and is logically and intuitively linked with many of the other sociological factors assessed by the preceding independent variables. The 2010 GSS measures the total household income of respondents. The variable has response categories spanning from income under $20,000 to income over $150,000. To simplify the analysis and avoid an immensely lengthy cross-tabulation, I have created a new variable with three response fields: "less than $25,000," "$25,000 to $59,999" and "$60,000 and over" in total household income, which approximately divides the sample into thirds.

The result of the weighted cross-tabulation of the association between same-sex marriage attitude and income shows an inconsistent pattern. While higher levels of household income seem to be associated with greater approval for gay marriage, each of the income groups exhibit more agreement than disagreement. The absolute value of the gamma statistic, .039 reveals a weak strength of association. If we know respondents' income range, we reduce our error in predicting their attitude on gay marriage by 3.9%. Unlike the other independent variables analyzed thus far, the association between same-sex marriage attitude and income is not statistically significant at any conventional alpha level (p=.368). A z-test of the gamma statistic produces a p-value of .368. We fail to reject the null hypothesis that the population value of gamma is zero.

Multivariate Cross-Tabulation Analysis

This portion of the analysis will selectively introduce some control variables into the original bivariate cross-tabulations in order to add some demographic detail to our understanding of gay marriage attitudes.

The Effect of Sex, Controlling for Race

Table 6 (on page 33) shows the results of the cross-tabulation of the association between same-sex marriage attitude and sex, controlling for race. With respect to the pattern of the association, females are consistently more approving of gay marriage than males, regardless of race – 51.7% to 44.9%, 37.4% to 36.4%, and 66.2% to 29.6% are the female-to-male percentages agreeing with gay marriage for whites, blacks, and other races, respectively. With this said, the extent of the disparity in approval among sexes differs from race to race. For whites, the difference between female and male approval is approximately 7%, whereas it is only 1% for blacks, and 36.6% for other races. Thus, the strength of sex as a predictor of attitude toward same-sex marriage varies across racial categories. The absolute values of the gamma statistic for this association are .151, .118, and .537 for whites, blacks, and other races, respectively. The robustness of sex as a predictor is mixed, as the strength of the association is weak for whites and blacks, but strong for other racial groups. With respect to significance of the association between gay marriage attitude and race, the p-values for the racial groups are approximately .007, .379, and .000 for whites, blacks, and other groups, respectively. At the .05 alpha level, the association between same-sex marriage attitude and sex is only statistically significant for racial groups other than white and black. In other words, there is only sufficient evidence of a true association in the larger population from which this sample was drawn for "Other" racial groups.

The Effect of Attendance, Controlling for Race

Earlier in the analysis it was established that blacks were significantly less approving than whites of same-sex marriage. Additionally, it was demonstrated that those individuals who attend religious services more frequently are significantly less approving of same-sex marriage

than others. One of the assumptions in the public and scholarly discussion of this issue is whether the more disapproving attitude of blacks toward same-sex marriage is due to the influence of the black church (Smith and Harris 2005: 193). As Smith and Harris (2005) put it, "Black churchgoers have in fact displayed strong anti-gay rights tendencies. Black churchgoers have stronger conservative tendencies and affinities" (193). In this scenario, frequency of religious service attendance functions as an indicator of religiosity. For the purposes of examining the causal relationship in question, I will have the "RACE" variable only compare blacks and whites, while coding "Others" as missing values. This tactic will allow me to better assess the notion suggested by Smith and Harris (2005).

The multivariate cross-tabulation shown in Table 7 (on page 34) shows that with respect to pattern, frequency of religious service attendance has the same effect on attitude toward gay marriage regardless of whether we are looking at whites or blacks. In both the black and the white racial groups, with each increasing increment of religious service attendance, agreement with gay marriage decreases. Along similar lines, with each increasing increment of religious service attendance, disagreement with gay marriage increases. With respect to the strength of the association, the absolute value of the gamma statistic for whites is .503, indicative of a strong strength of association, while the absolute value of gamma for blacks is .307, indicative of a moderate association. While the strength of the association does differ between the white and black racial categories, the association between religiosity, as measured by service attendance and same-sex marriage attitude is statistically significant among both whites and blacks at the .05 alpha level. The association has a p-value less than .000 for whites and .002 for blacks. This multivariate cross-tabulation reveals an occurrence of replication, and seems to diminish the weight behind Smith and Harris' (2010) argument. Religious service attendance has the same

effect on gay marriage attitude regardless of whether we are looking just at whites, or just as blacks, although the effect is slightly stronger among whites.

The Effect of Age, Controlling for Sex

The previous bivariate analysis demonstrated that females were more agreeable to same-sex marriage than males. Additionally, it showed that younger people were more accepting of same-sex marriage than older individuals. By testing this association and controlling for sex, we will see if, among other things, sex makes less of a difference on gay marriage attitude among the already more tolerant younger population. For the purpose of simplicity, I have collapsed the age variable into three categories in the multivariate cross-tabulation shown in Table 8 (on page 35): under 30, 30-55, and over 55.

When controlling for sex, the pattern observed at the bivariate level is replicated. Regardless of sex, young people are consistently more agreeable to gay marriage than older ones. With respect to the strength of the relationship, by virtue of the absolute values of gamma, we see that the relationship between same-sex marriage attitude and age is slightly stronger for males than females (.337 vs. .303). Both males and females produce a moderately strong association. Regardless of sex, the relationship is statistically significant, as both gender groups produce p-values less than .000 at the .05 alpha level. The effect of age is robust, withstanding the control of sex.

The Effect of Age, Controlling for Race

Having just controlled for individuals' sex within the bivariate same-sex marriage attitudes and age relationship, we will now control for race, again limiting response categories to

whites and blacks. The results shown in Table 9 (on page 36) will show if the trend observed across age levels is consistent among racial groups.

The multivariate cross-tabulation shown in Table 9 shows that the pattern of younger respondents being more agreeable to gay marriage is replicated within both white and black racial groups. As far as strength is concerned though, we see a substantially stronger association in the black racial group. The gamma statistic for the gay marriage attitude – age association for whites is .253, a moderate association. On the other hand, the association has a gamma statistic of .711 in the black racial group, a strong association. The association is statistically significant for both whites and blacks, as both groups have p-values less than .000 at the .05 alpha level. The effect of age is robust, although it is notably stronger for blacks compared to whites.

The Effect of Political Views, Controlling for Sex

At the bivariate level, political ideology was found to be a strong and statistically significant predictor of attitude toward same-sex marriage. The results shown in Table 10 (on page 37) are designed to determine if this association endures after holding sex constant.

Table 10 demonstrates that the effect of politics seen at the bivariate level replicates itself for both males and females. The pattern of liberals being more agreeable than moderates or conservatives to same-sex marriage is consistent among both males and females. With respect to strength, the bivariate association, as assessed by the absolute value of gamma, is similar for both males and females. Within the male group, the association is moderately strong, with a .471 gamma statistic. The association is strong for females, with a .571 gamma statistic. Political views are a statistically significant predictor of same-sex marriage attitude for males and females at the .05 alpha level, as indicated by p-values less than .000.

Table 6: Weighted Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Sex, Controlling for Race

RACE OF RESPONDENT				RESPONDENT'S SEX		Total
				Male	Female	
White	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	209	262	471
			% within Sex	44.9%	51.7%	48.5%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	47	66	113
			% within Sex	10.1%	13.0%	11.6%
		Disagree	Count	209	179	388
			% within Sex	44.9%	35.3%	39.9%
Black	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	28	34	62
			% within Sex	36.4%	37.4%	36.9%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	7	17	24
			% within Sex	9.1%	18.7%	14.3%
		Disagree	Count	42	40	82
			% within Sex	54.5%	44.0%	48.8%
Other	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	16	43	59
			% within Sex	29.6%	66.2%	49.6%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	17	10	27
			% within Sex	31.5%	15.4%	22.7%
		Disagree	Count	21	12	33
			% within Sex	38.9%	18.5%	27.7%

Note: For the White subsample, gamma = .151 (p-value=.007); for the Black subsample, gamma= .118 (p-value=.379); and for the Other category, gamma= .537 (p-value= less than .000).

Table 7: Weighted Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Religious Attendance, Controlling for Race

RACE OF RESPONDENT				ATTENDANCE				Total
				Less than Monthly	Monthly to 2-3 times per Month	Weekly	Multiple Times per Week	
White	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	337	67	56	11	471
			% within How Often R Attends Religious Services	61.3%	48.9%	26.3%	15.7%	48.6%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	66	12	30	4	112
			% within How Often R Attends Religious Services	12.0%	8.8%	14.1%	5.7%	11.5%
		Disagree	Count	147	58	127	55	387
			% within How Often R Attends Religious Services	26.7%	42.3%	59.6%	78.6%	39.9%
Black	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	36	14	10	2	62
			% within How Often R Attends Religious Services	45.6%	35.9%	29.4%	11.8%	36.7%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	12	6	2	4	24
			% within How Often R Attends Religious Services	15.2%	15.4%	5.9%	23.5%	14.2%
		Disagree	Count	31	19	22	11	83
			% within How Often R Attends Religious Services	39.2%	48.7%	64.7%	64.7%	49.1%

Note: For the White subsample, gamma = .503(p-value= less than .000); and for the Black subsample, gamma=.307 (p-value=.002).

Table 8: Weighted Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Age, Controlling for Sex

RESPONDENT'S SEX				AGE			Total
				Under 30	30-55	Over 55	
Male	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	64	129	60	253
			% within Age	62.1%	41.6%	33.0%	42.5%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	22	30	18	70
			% within Age	21.4%	9.7%	9.9%	11.8%
		Disagree	Count	17	151	104	272
			% within Age	16.5%	48.7%	57.1%	45.7%
Female	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	82	162	93	337
			% within Age	67.2%	50.5%	42.5%	50.9%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	22	50	22	94
			% within Age	18.0%	15.6%	10.0%	14.2%
		Disagree	Count	18	109	104	231
			% within Age	14.8%	34.0%	47.5%	34.9%

Note: For the male subsample, gamma = .337 (p-value= less than .000); and for the female subsample, gamma=.303 (p-value= less than .000).

Table 9: Weighted Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Age, Controlling for Race

RACE OF RESPONDENT				AGE			Total
				Under 30	30-55	Over 55	
White	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	92	235	143	470
			% within Age	63.0%	49.2%	41.2%	48.4%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	28	50	35	113
			% within Age	19.2%	10.5%	10.1%	11.6%
		Disagree	Count	26	193	169	388
			% within Age	17.8%	40.4%	48.7%	40.0%
Black	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	28	29	4	61
			% within Age	70.0%	31.9%	11.1%	36.5%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	7	16	1	24
			% within Age	17.5%	17.6%	2.8%	14.4%
		Disagree	Count	5	46	31	82
			% within Age	12.5%	50.5%	86.1%	49.1%

Note: For the White subsample, gamma = .253(p-value=less than .000);
and for the Black subsample, gamma=.711 (p-value= less than .000).

Table 10: Weighted Cross-Tabulation between Same-Sex Marriage Attitude and Political Views, Controlling for Sex

RESPONDENT'S SEX				POLITICAL VIEWS			Total
				Liberal	Moderate	Cons.	
Male	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	95	96	52	243
			% within Liberal, Conservative, or Moderate	66.0%	42.9%	25.1%	42.3%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	14	34	21	69
			% within Liberal, Conservative, or Moderate	9.7%	15.2%	10.1%	12.0%
		Disagree	Count	35	94	134	263
			% within Liberal, Conservative, or Moderate	24.3%	42.0%	64.7%	45.7%
Female	Homosexuals Should Have Right To Marry	Agree	Count	151	131	49	331
			% within Liberal, Conservative, or Moderate	74.0%	53.3%	25.3%	51.4%
		Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Count	24	45	22	91
			% within Liberal, Conservative, or Moderate	11.8%	18.3%	11.3%	14.1%
		Disagree	Count	29	70	123	222
			% within Liberal, Conservative, or Moderate	14.2%	28.5%	63.4%	34.5%

Note: For the male subsample, gamma = .471 (p-value= less than .000); and for the female subsample, gamma=.571 (p-value= less than .000).

Multivariate Regression Analysis

In order to assess both the robustness of the effect of each of the independent variables on attitude toward same-sex marriage as well as the relative strength of each independent variable as a predictor, I will conduct an ordinary least squares regression. While it would be possible to use the ordinary logistic regression technique to guide my analysis, I will use the ordinary least squares regression technique, because previous research has shown that the findings of the two techniques are substantially similar when applied to the GSS data (Baunach 2011: 359). I will produce three models using ordinary least squares regression. First, I will employ three basic demographic factors as independent variables: sex, race, and age. Next, I will produce a regression model with other factors as dependent variables: political views, educational attainment, frequency of religious service attendance, and yearly household income. Finally, I will produce a model incorporating all seven of the aforementioned independent variables. Table 11 (on page 39) summarizes the results of the three ordinary least squares regression models.

Table 11: Ordinary Least Squares Regression of Attitude toward Same-Sex Marriage and Independent Variables

	Independent Variables	Model 1 *Adjusted R-Squared = .080*	Model 2 *Adjusted R-Squared = .2815*	Model 3 *Adjusted R-Squared = .345*
BASIC DEMOGRAPHICS	Sex (male =0)	-.269** -.088		-.280*** -.092
	Race (white=0)	.445*** .103		.442*** .101
	Age	.025*** .267		.020*** .205
OTHER SOCIAL FACTORS AND INFLUENCES	Education		-.180*** -.150	-.191*** -.156
	Political Views (very conservative =5)		.380*** .365	.392*** .373
	Religious Service Attendance		.148*** .272	.136*** .248
	Income		.004 .017	-.005 -.021
sample size		1,138	1,096	996

*In the results for each independent variable, the upper value displays the unstandardized slope, while the lower value displays the standardized slope.
*With respect to the unstandardized slopes, *denotes a p-value $\leq$.05, **denotes a p-value $\leq$ .01, and ***denotes a p-value $\leq$.001.

When interpreting the results of the ordinary least squares regression models, two key statistics, both of which are displayed within Table 11, are particularly noteworthy. The unstandardized slope speaks to the stability of an effect across the different models. This quantity allows us to compare the effects of a single independent variable across equations, as shown above. The standardized slope allows us to compare the relative strength of independent variables within the same model. In effect, this quantity shows which variable has the strongest influence in predicting the dependent variable, in this case attitude toward gay marriage. Sex and race are coded dichotomously for the purposes of this regression, with sex allowing for male

and female as response categories, and race allowing for white or black as response categories, all other responses being coded as missing values. All of the other independent variables incorporated in the regression models shown in Table 11 are included in their original 2010 GSS form, uncondensed.

When examining the unstandardized slopes in model one, at the .001 alpha level, the effects of race and age on gay marriage attitude are not attributable to sampling error. A real population relationship exists between these variables bivariately, holding others constant in the equation. The effect of sex on gay marriage attitude is not attributable to sampling error at the .01 alpha level, and a real population relationship exists between the two at this level. In order to assess the relative strength of the variables, we cannot use the unstandardized slope, as it does not take into account differing units of measure between the various independent variables, thus, we must consult the standardized slopes. Using the standardized slope values in Table 11 as a reference, gay marriage attitude is most strongly influenced by age, followed in order by race and sex in model one.

In the second regression model displayed in Table 11, at the .001 alpha level, the effects of educational attainment, measured by highest degree earned, political views, and frequency of religious service attendance on gay marriage attitude are not attributable to sampling error. A real population relationship exists between these variables bivariately, holding others constant in the equation. A respondent's total household income did not prove to be statistically significant as a predictor of same-sex marriage attitude at a conventional alpha level. When looking at the standardized slopes of the independent variables included in model two, attitude toward same-sex marriage is most heavily influenced by political ideology, followed by frequency of religious service attendance, educational attainment, and household income, in that order.

Finally, in incorporating all of the independent variables in the analysis into the final regression model, the unstandardized slopes in Table 11 reveal that sex, race, age, educational attainment, political views, and religious service attendance are statistically significant predictors of gay marriage attitude at the .001 alpha level. The standardized slopes in the final model reveal the following order of strength of independent variable influence of gay marriage attitude, from strongest to weakest: political ideology, religious service attendance, age, educational attainment, race, sex, and total household income. The demographic effects are replicated in the full model. The effect sizes and relative strengths are virtually identical in the full and reduced models. This provides evidence of replication amongst different specifications of the model. It supports the conclusion that these variables have stable, robust effects on gay marriage attitude, and that these effects do not depend on particular model specifications. Additionally, the tolerance levels for each independent variable in each model are all high (close to 1), indicating that multicollinearity is not a problem with these data. The adjusted r-squared values listed for each of the models indicate the percent of the variation in gay marriage attitude explained by the particular equation.

Discussion and Conclusion

The issue of same-sex marriage remains a fixture in the American political discourse, and figures to only become more prominent as the historic election year in 2012 progresses. With two state Governors signing marriage equality into law in 2012, the issue remains salient in the minds of American voters and political figures on both sides of the political spectrum. When pressed on the issue, President Obama has stated that his position on same-sex marriage is "evolving," and many pundits believe that if elected to serve a second term in office, the

Democratic President will come out in favor of marriage equality himself (Rapoport 2012).

When viewing same-sex marriage from a policy perspective, the results of the cross-tabulations and ordinary least squares regression models in the analysis suggest reason for optimism for advocates of gay rights and the advancement of a marriage equality agenda. When looking at the most influential factors in predicting an individual's attitude toward same-sex marriage, political ideology and age are two of the three leading independent variables. The analysis demonstrates that more liberal individuals tend to be significantly more agreeable to gay marriage rights than moderates or conservatives, and younger Americans tend to be significantly more agreeable to gay marriage rights than older individuals. Baunach (2011) finds that cohort succession is largely responsible for the increased agreement towards gay marriage rights over time. The fact that younger Americans are proving to be more agreeable to gay marriage, and that age demonstrated itself to be a strong predictor of attitude bodes well for activists supporting the gay rights movement. Additionally, younger people are significantly more likely to take on liberal political ideologies than older individuals, particularly with respect to social issues (Brewer 2008: 65).

In spite of the significant shift in public opinion the last decade has seen towards favorably viewing gay marriage (Silver 2011), there are most definitely causes for concern for supporters of the marriage equality movement. It is no secret that the Protestant church, the Catholic Church, and other similar religious organizations stand as vibrant and influential institutions in 21st century America. As confirmed by the analysis, frequency of religious service attendance remains a very strong predictor of attitude toward gay marriage, second only to political ideology in my final, all-inclusive ordinary least squares regression model. Both the current and the last several federal campaign cycles have been replete with appeals, particularly

by conservative candidates, to socially conservative voters on issues such as the prevention of gay marriage. While there is no doubt that this practice will continue, as it is a tremendously effective voter mobilization tool for the modern Republican Party (Campbell and Monson 2008: 411), my analysis, as well as that of Baunach (2011) call into question how effective the strategy will be in years to come. Given the clout that one's age has on attitude toward gay marriage, and the role of intracohort change in accounting for the change in public opinion over time, it certainly stands to reason that the days of efficacy of socially conservative wedge issues as viable voter mobilization strategies may be numbered. While there is a high level of variability in public opinion on the issue, and the nation is unquestionably very divided on it, there will likely be renewed pressure on the White House and federal government to take this issue on in the months and years to come. Based on my analysis, supporters of a gay rights agenda would be best served focusing on young people, liberals, and less religious Americans to garner a strong base of support. My analysis largely confirms the theoretical assumptions provided by the past research cited.

When evaluating my analysis holistically, it is important to acknowledge some limitations present in the research design. Although the GSS is a highly reputable, nationally representative survey, there are natural limitations associated with using quantitative data of this sort. When looking at the variables incorporated into my analysis, educational attainment, for one, is a difficult quality to measure with a high degree of validity (Brewer 2008: 97). The GSS contains a number of variables getting at one's educational attainment, but I made the decision to measure attainment by the highest degree one has earned on the basis that it is a relatively objective measure. Additionally, with respect to religion, as explained in the analysis, I did not include each of the unique "Other" religions incorporated into the GSS responses in my cross-

tabulations for the sake of simplicity. With this said, the full, uncondensed religion variable was utilized in my ordinary least squares regression models. Also, on the topic of religion, I elected not to use the composite measure of religious traditionalism devised by Steensland et al. (2000). Although I chose frequency of attendance at religious services as an indicator of religiosity in my study, it would be valuable to see if my results are replicated using this composite measure. Steensland et al. (2000) suggest that more "traditional" religions are more opposed to gay marriage (302). Frequency of attendance to services is a component of this composite measurement.

The GSS contains a series of variables designed to measure a respondent's proximity to and contact with homosexuals. There are GSS items asking about the number of gay individuals a respond knows, the number of gay individuals in the respondent's family, and the number of gay individuals in the respondent's place of work, among other items. Unfortunately these items were not asked as part of the 2010 GSS. In future research, should these variables be asked in the 2012 GSS, it would be very valuable to include a composite measure of these variables in an updated analysis. Theoretical assumptions in social science lead us to believe that a closer relational distance to homosexuals makes an individual more inclined to support gay rights (Brewer 2008: 13). It would be valuable to test this assumption. It would be particularly significant to assess the robustness of a composite measure of proximity relative to any and all of the independent variables included in my analysis.

The past research cited presents evidence that attitudes toward gay marriage are rapidly changing both in America and elsewhere. For this reason, my analysis may look very different 10-20 years from now as younger, theoretically more accepting populations replace older ones. The possibility also exists that younger individuals may become more politically conservative as

they age. My analysis can be useful for individuals and advocacy groups in support of and against the notion of marriage equality. The results associated with the independent variable of age present the most compelling evidence that analysis like that presented in this thesis will be necessary and relevant for years to come.

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