

Marriage and political engagement across sexual identities

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The legal recognition of same-sex marriages came through struggles between lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) social movements and conservative countermovements (Soule, 2004). Culturally, most Americans opposed same-sex marriage until the last decade, and proponents of marriage equality had remarkable disadvantages in terms of traditional modes of power such as campaign contributions or access to politicians that endorse same-sex marriage. When faced with such obstacles, members of stigmatized group often turn to social movement tactics of boycotting, protesting, and civil disobedience in an attempt to force concessions in recalcitrant targets.

While the efforts of LGBT activists were mostly responsible for expansion of marriage rights to LGBT people, the virtues of same-sex marriage were debated among sexual minorities (Ghaziani, Taylor, & Stone, 2016). Most scholars agree that marriage rights were not desired by the first wave of queer liberationists in the 1970s (Gray, 2009). Over time, the demands of the LGBT movement became less unified and activists had many internal debates about the virtues and perils of same-sex marriage (Haider-Markel & Miller, 2017). More liberal and assimilationist LGBT activists wanted access to the social acceptance, rights, and benefits of married heterosexuals (Rothblum, Balsam, & Solomon, 2008). More radical and queer advocates warned that marriage is an inherently oppressive institution that should not be mimicked or recreated by sexual minorities (Bernstein & Taylor, 2013). Such sentiments can be found in the “End Marriage” manifesto by Gay Shame (Boellstorff, 2007), a radical queer movement that opposes the mainstreaming of LGBT people: “If you look at the rhetoric of the freedom to marry movement and the Republican Party their similarities are frighteningly apparent. In their ideal world we would all be monogamously coupled, instead of rethinking the practice of ‘coupling.’” Similarly, scholar Lisa Duggan (2003) decried that the legalization of same-sex marriages would create a “depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (p. 50) and that married, LGBT people would “go home and cook dinner, forever” (p. 62).

DOI: [10.4324/9781003089995-16](https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003089995-16)

Social science research on the political effects of same-sex marriage is still in its infancy. Some scholars have noted that same-sex marriage bans were detrimental to the psychological well-being of sexual minorities (Fingerhut, Riggle, & Rostosky, 2011) and that lesbians and gay men often feel better when they join social movements that push for LGBT rights (Velez & Moradi, 2016). Moreover, research using the minority stress framework suggests that being legally married can help gay men and lesbians buffer the negative mental health effects of homophobia (Reczek, 2020). Nevertheless, the effects of same-sex marriage have yet to be fully established in the social scientific literature.

In particular, it remains unclear whether and/or how marriage may affect the political attitudes and engagement of gay men and lesbians. For heterosexuals, the transition into marriage often acts as a conservative force. Among other things, marriage often reinforces the gender conservatism of heterosexual husbands and wives (Greenlee, 2010) and can lead to greater participation in conservative social movements (Swank, 2020b). The few studies published to date on political activism among same-sex couples have offered incompatible results. For liberal activism among gay men and lesbians, same-sex marriage been characterized as a boost (Rothblum et al., 2008; Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke, & Andersen, 2009), a deterrent (Swank, 2018b; Swank, Atteberry-Ash, Coulombe, & Woodford, 2020), and an irrelevant factor (Ocobock, 2018). Thus, this study asks some straightforward research questions: Does marriage generally encourage more conservative political beliefs and behaviors regarding LGBT and feminist issues? If so, do the conservative consequences of marriage equally apply to heterosexuals and lesbian and gay spouses? Or more precisely, do pro-LGBT and feminist sensibilities disappear when people of all sexual identities get married?

Literature review

This chapter address a three-way relationship between marital status, sexual identities, and political beliefs/social movement participation. Most publications look at one- or two-variable relationships. For example, some studies explore the ways that sexual identities impact participation in the LGBT (Herek, Norton, Allen, & Sims, 2010) or women's rights movements (Friedman & Ayres, 2013), while other studies explore the role of marriage in predicting feminist or homophobic sentiments (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Several studies explore the role of civic unions on being an LGBT activist among gay men and lesbians (Rothblum et al., 2008), but only a few have compared the impact of marriage on political engagements across sexual identities (Swank et al., 2020). Accordingly, this literature review addresses an eclectic mix of studies that address these three processes: (1) the ways sexual identity impacts a person's reactions to discrimination and injustice toward LGBT people and women; (2) the ways that marriage impacts

the political beliefs and behaviors of heterosexuals; and (3) the ways that marriage impacts gay men and lesbians' commitment to liberal social change.

Sexual identities and liberal activism

Sexual identities are often connected to political activism. For instance, sexual minorities generally vote for Democratic candidates more than heterosexuals (Swank, 2018b). Furthermore, there is a sexuality gap in protest participation (Swank & Fahs, 2019), with sexual minorities having a higher likelihood of participating in protests than heterosexuals. Sexual identities have their biggest impact in political efforts to contest heteronormativity (Andersen & Jennings, 2010; Friedman & Ayres, 2013). In one study, it was estimated that 49.4% of gay men have ever gone to a rally, march, or demonstration for a "sexual minority issue" (Herek et al., 2010), while another study noted that lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are more than 20 times more likely to join the LGBT rights movement than heterosexuals (Swank, 2018a).

The empirical literature is less clear on how sexual identities relate to feminist commitments. A set of studies suggest that lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals reject traditional gender norms more than heterosexuals (Grollman, 2019; Schnabel, 2018; Swank & Fahs, 2019). Research has also found that 51% of LGBT youth claim to have engaged in some sort of feminist activism (Fine, Torre, Frost, & Cabana, 2018) and that gay men correct sexist language more often than heterosexual men (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018). Several articles insist that sexual minorities embrace feminist labels faster than heterosexuals (Radke, Hornsey, & Barlow, 2018; Worthen 2020a) and that feminist protesting is elevated among sexual minorities (Conlin & Heesacker, 2018; Duncan, 1999; Friedman & Ayres, 2013; Radke et al., 2018; White, 2006).

However, other studies cast doubt such conclusions. For instance, some suggest that lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual women see similar amounts of sexism in American (Harnois, 2015) and that the desire to end gender inequality is the same for men of different sexualities (Harnois, 2017). Others have found that lesbians and gay men are slightly more likely to join feminist social movements but that this difference was not large enough to reach statistical significance (Swank, 2018a).

Marriage and political engagement

Changes in marital status appear to alter political participation in several ways (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 1997; Stoker & Jennings, 1995). For instance, getting married often dislocates one's style of living and obligations. Marriage remains a "greedy" institution (e.g., Gerstel & Sarkisian, 2006), and as such, couples may prioritize the marital relationship and their

spouse at the expense of civic engagements in the public sphere. This can include fewer interactions with friends, fewer memberships in community groups, and a general retreat from direct-action politics. Marriage can also create a need of ideological symmetry among partners (Alford, Hatemi, Hibbing, Martin, & Eaves, 2011). That is, spouses are often expected to become political replicas of one another, especially with wives bending their previous views to match those of their husband. This emphasis on wives and husbands suppressing their unique traits and worldviews can either encourage or discourage political engagement based on the expectations of a dominant partner (Iyengar, Konitzer, & Tedin, 2018). However, people who marry authoritarian, domineering, disrespectful, and violent partners are more likely to embrace conservative political causes because imposing partners generally despise liberal and feminist takes on gender relations, family arrangements, and sexual practices (Citarella & Mueller, 2015).

Empirical studies generally argue that marriage leads to greater gender and sexual conservatism among heterosexuals. Married women often endorse traditional gender prescriptions more than divorced or never married women (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004; Fahs, 2007; Harnois, 2015). Similarly, several studies have shown that stay-at-home mothers often have more conservative attitudes on abortion, premarital sex, and the division of labor in the family compared to women in the paid labor force (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004). Furthermore, heterosexual marriage also seems to reinforce the principles of heteronormativity. Married heterosexuals have fewer LGBT friends (Loehr, Doan, & Miller, 2015) and are more homophobic than heterosexuals who are not married (Elder & Greene, 2012; Loehr et al., 2015; Sherkat, 2017; Woodford, Levy, & Walls, 2013).

In terms of political engagement and behavior, heterosexual marriage often produces a retreat from leftist politics and attending political protests (Stoker & Jennings, 1995). Studies on voting preferences find that married people often vote for Republican candidates more than Democratic candidates (Elder & Greene, 2012; Plutzer & McBurnett, 1991). Marriage can also inspire greater participation in social movements that defend conservative lifestyles, such as prayer in schools, pro-life, and opposition to same-sex marriage (Swank & Fahs, 2016). Marriage can reduce leftist activism for all partners, but heterosexual marriages seem to stunt the direct-action activism of wives more than husbands (Corrigall-Brown, 2012). Be it issues of wives lacking control over their family financial resources (Burns et al., 1997), having disrespectful husbands (Burns et al., 1997), or the traditional expectations of wives being more passive, rule-abiding, and confined to the domestic realm (Swank & Fahs, 2017), married women often engage in less feminist activism than single or divorced women (Stout, Kretschmer, & Ruppner, 2017).

However, what happens in heterosexual marriages may or may not apply to same-sex marriages. People of all sexualities often say that they

get married to publicly express lifelong love, to build social support with parents, to have children, and to gain material benefits on taxes, health care, and social security (Kimport, 2014; Richman, 2014; Rostosky, Riggle, Rothblum, & Balsam, 2016). However, lesbians and gay men appear more inclined than heterosexuals to enter marriage with the intent of changing the regressive practices of the institution. Qualitative studies often report that lesbians and gay men who marry do so in part to make a political statement about the equality of same-sex couples and/or to challenge the traditional ways that marriage is enacted (Kimport, 2014; Rostosky et al., 2016; Taylor et al., 2009). Quantitative studies also find that up to 81% of married same-sex couples characterized their wedding as “acts of civil disobedience,” “a political statement,” “a civil rights movement,” and “a protest against discrimination.” (Taylor et al., 2009).

The first wave of lesbians and gay men who married were indeed very political. A study of early married same-sex couples found that 96% were registered to vote and that 94% had voted in the last national election (Rothblum et al., 2008). Another early study found that 40% had given money to an elected official (Taylor et al., 2009). The majority of these early same-sex couples called themselves liberal or extremely liberal (Rothblum et al., 2008), and 38% had gone to a rally for same-sex marriage (Taylor et al., 2009). This liberalism of initial lesbian and gay marriages extended to high levels of feminist sentiments as well (Rothblum et al., 2008) with 42%–48% being involved in pro-choice and women’s right movements (Taylor et al., 2009).

However, later studies on the political effects of same-sex marriage complicate these earlier conclusions. For instance, Ocobock (2018) sampled married and unmarried sexual minorities and found that “there were no statistically significant associations between marital status and levels of participation in any of the examined areas of LGBTQ community life (like going to LGBT cultural events, belonging to LGBT support groups, and seeing LGBT friends)” (p. 372). Similarly, a study from Australia found that single gay men vote more often than married gay men (Thai & Dellers, 2020), and some studies suggest that marriage partially explains why heterosexuals attend fewer protests than sexual minorities (Swank et al., 2020; Swank & Fahs, 2019).

Finally, there is some evidence that suggests marital effects may vary by a person’s sexual identity. It is well established that marriage generally lessens feminist and LGBT affirmative sensibilities among heterosexuals (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Elder & Greene, 2012; Woodford et al., 2013), but the findings on politics and same-sex marriage are much less consistent. Some studies suggest same-sex marriages adhere to similar patterns as their heterosexual counterparts (Ocobock, 2018; Swank & Fahs, 2019). Alternatively, some studies conclude that same-sex marriage can truly alter or transform marital practices because married lesbians and gay men are

more politically engaged than the single and divorced people in lesbian and gay communities (Rothblum et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2009). To address this uncertainty, this chapter examines the association of a person's marital status and their pro-LGBT and feminist beliefs across individuals of different sexual identities. In doing so, this chapter addresses several research questions: Do sexual identities modify a person's understanding of LGBT and feminist issues? Is marriage generally a conservative force that suppresses pro-LGBT and feminist beliefs and activism among married people? Does marriage discourage pro-LGBT and feminist commitments the same way for people of different sexual identities?

Methods

The data is pooled from two waves of the 2010–2012 of the American National Election Study (ANES). The study is confined to people who called themselves lesbian, gay, or heterosexual ($N = 3443$). People who skipped the sexual identity question or called themselves bisexual were excluded from the sample. This decision was based on problems of missing data or uncertainty as to whether a person was in a same-sex or different-sex marriage (Hernandez, Schwenke, & Wilson, 2011)

ANES drew on Knowledge Networks (KN) for respondents. KN created and maintains a panel of people who have previously agreed to complete online surveys. When building a list of 40,000 US households, KN recruited people through random-digit dialing and address-based approaches.

Measures

Pro-LGBT and feminist consciousness are multi-dimensional worldviews. In outlining the Queer Consciousness Scale, Duncan, Mincer, and Dunn (2017) draw attention to four specific dimensions: (1) a sense of common fate, or the notion that what happens to women/sexual minorities is universal and relevant to every women or LGBT person; (2) power discontent, or the idea that women/sexual minorities lack sufficient power and influence in society; (3) system blame, or the understanding that women/sexual minorities' lack of power is unjust and caused by systemic forces; and (4) collective orientation, or the awareness that the best way to challenge sexism/heterosexism is through working as a large group.

ANES had measures for system blame and emotional closeness to women and lesbians and gay men, which I treat as a proxy for common fate. Two items dealt system blame as respondents were initially asked, "How serious a problem is discrimination against [women or lesbians and gay men] in the United States?" Likert responses ranged from 5 if they indicated discrimination is an "extremely serious problem" to 1 if they thought discrimination was "not a problem at all."

ANES also asked affect questions about lesbian and gay men and feminists. In using a Feeling thermometer, respondents were asked to rank their enthusiasm toward lesbians and gay men and feminists through a 101-point rating scale. A 0 indicates very cold or hostile reactions, and a 100 denotes very warm and favorable sentiments.

Pro-LGBT and feminist activism

People can fight heterosexism and sexism in many ways. ANES asked people if they “were active” in the “LGBT rights movement” and the “women’s rights movement.” These items trace lifetime engagement and do not address the ways, frequency, or intensity in which a person participated in either movement (lifetime participation = 1, no participation = 0).

Marital status

Marital status was revealed by the question: “Are you currently – married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?” The cell sizes for widowed and separated were less than three for lesbians and gay men, so I converted the answer to this question into three dummy variables (1 = never been married, 0 = all others; 1 = currently married, 0 = all others; 1 = currently divorced, 0 = all others). This scheme produced a sample with 977 not married individuals (28%), 2012 married individuals (58%), and 488 divorcees (14.2%). These responses were able to address a person’s marital status at the time of the survey, but they did not capture cases of single people cohabiting, a civil union certificate, number of marriages, or the sex/gender of current/former marital spouses.

Sexual identities

Although sexual orientations can be based on identities, behaviors, and attractions (Umberson, Thomeer, Kroeger, Lodge, & Xu, 2015), some studies suggest that embracing a lesbian or gay identity label has the biggest bearing on political attitudes (Schnabel, 2018; Swank & Fahs, 2019). ANES asked people to classify their sexual identity: “Do you consider yourself...?” The three answers of heterosexual, bisexual, and gay or lesbian were transformed into one dichotomous variable (lesbian, gay = 1, heterosexual = 0). With this coding scheme, 97.5% of the sample were considered heterosexual ($N = 3443$), 2.5% were deemed lesbian or gay.

Analysis plan

Tests of group differences were conducted through an Analysis of Variance technique (ANOVA). Sexual identity and marital status functioned as the

independent variables while the dependent variables were pro-LGBT/feminist sensibilities and participation in LGBT and feminist social movements. Fisher F-tests are reported for most of variables, but the Welch's F-test is used when the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated (Gamst, Meyers, & Guarino, 2008). When F-tests were significant, Tuckey's post-hoc tests determined which of the three marital statuses were distinct from each other. Missing data was handled through a listwise approach that only analyzes cases with observed data in the independent and dependent variables.

Results

Table 13.1 shows group differences by sexual identity and marital status. Column one reveals that sexual identities were associated with beliefs and actions regarding LGBT issues. ANOVAs revealed a main effect for the perceived seriousness of heterosexism $\{F(1, 3299) = 19.85, p = <.001\}$, warmth toward lesbians and gay men $\{F(1, 3299) = 75.00, p = <.001\}$, and recently joining the LGBT movement $\{F(1, 3299) = 124.49, p = <.001\}$. Thus, lesbians and gay men were more likely to perceive significant issues related to the treatment of sexual minorities, were more likely to have positive feelings toward lesbians and gay men, and were more likely to join social movements to address issues of heterosexism. While there was a massive sexuality gap on LGBT issues, the same cannot be said of feminist commitments and activism. Lesbians and gay men displayed more affection for feminists than heterosexuals $\{F(1, 3299) = 6.73, p = <.01\}$, but perceptions of the severity of sexism and participation in the women's movement were similar for people of diverse sexual identities. Thus, there was a sexuality gap when addressing issues of sexual prejudice, but the sexuality gap for feminist tendencies was meager or insignificant.

Marriage and social conservatism go together. With *f*-scores between 25.5 and 5.26, there were significant differences between the not married, married, and divorced on every dependent variable ($p < .001$ or $p < .01$). Not married people were the most liberal on all measures while married people were mostly on the other end of the spectrum. Post-hoc tests indicated that not married people were significantly more aware and committed to liberalism, LGBT liberation, and feminist causes than married people. Divorced people were significantly more conservative than not married people on three domains (considering heterosexism serious, feeling warmth to lesbians/gays, and joining the women's movement) and significantly more liberal than married people in four cases (political identities, seeing sexism, liking feminists, and joining the women's movement). Overall, it seems that there was rank order of liberalism going from not married to divorced to married. It is important to note that getting divorced seems to do little in LGBT politics but increases feminist commitments and activism in this sample of

Table 13.1 Sexual Identities, Marital Status, and LGBT Activism/Feminism

Variable	Lesbian/ Gay		F	Not married			F
	Hetero			Married	Divorced		
Conservative ^a	2.71	4.11	38.34***	3.71	4.27	3.86	25.56***
Heterosexism is Serious ^b	4.02	3.47	19.85***	3.62	3.40	3.42	13.31***
Warmth toward Lesbians/Gays ^c	74.86	44.45	75.00***	51.28	42.31	44.58	25.34***
Joined LGBT Movement ^d	.142	.009	124.49***	2.8	.4	1.2	14.53***
Sexism is Serious ^e	2.70	2.66	.13	2.75	2.56	2.74	15.51***
Warmth toward Feminists ^f	50.25	42.36	6.73**	44.1	41.1	44.3	5.26**
Joined Women's Movement ^g	.011	.012	.00	2.6	.5	.8	11.72***
N	83	3559		977	2012	488	

Notes

** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < 0.001$

^a Marital Status: Never Married \neq Married; Married \neq Divorced.

^b Marital Status: Never Married \neq Married; Never Married \neq Divorced.

^c Marital Status: Never Married \neq Married; Never Married \neq Divorced.

^d Marital Status: Never Married \neq Married.

^e Marital Status: Never Married \neq Married; Married \neq Divorced.

^f Marital Status: Never Married \neq Married; Married \neq Divorced.

^g Marital Status: Never Married \neq Married; Never Married \neq Divorced.

men and women. Thus, getting divorced seems to delegitimize traditional gender roles but does little to alter one's sexual prejudice or commitment to becoming a LGBT activist.

Table 13.2 separates the sample by sexual identity. This disaggregated analysis reveals some sexuality-specific results. The tendency to marry varied by sexual identities as 59% of heterosexuals were married compared to only 16% of lesbians and gay men. One's marital status also mattered a great deal among heterosexuals. With *f*-scores between 18.1 and 5.2, all of the differences in the dependent variables were statically significant (similar to the findings of Table 13.1 because that table was comprised of almost 90% heterosexuals). Post-hoc tests also revealed that married heterosexuals often took significantly more conservative stances than not married and divorced heterosexuals. On the other hand, there was one major anomaly among heterosexuals: married heterosexuals were more attuned to the amount of

Table 13.2 Marital Status and LGBT Activism/Feminism by Sexual Identity

Variable	Lesbian and gay				Heterosexual			
	Not married	Married	Divorced	F	Not married	Married	Divorced	F
Conservative ^a	2.56	2.64	2.30	.25	3.82	4.29	3.91	18.15***
Heterosexism is Serious ^b	4.09	4.09	2.83	8.16**	3.55	3.93	3.40	6.03**
Warmth toward Lesbians/Gays ^c	86.85	81.36	27.20	24.64***	47.82	41.94	44.71	10.54***
Joined LGBT Movement ^d	11.1	27.2	20.0	1.07	2.0	.2	.8	12.00***
Sexism is Serious ^e	2.50	3.27	2.80	3.24*	2.75	2.56	2.73	15.58***
Warmth toward Feminists ^f	51.57	71.09	39.30	3.66*	43.82	40.89	44.49	5.28**
Joined Women's Movement ^g	.0	9.0	.0	3.07	2.55	.5	.8	11.25**
N	61	13	9		883	1998	391	

Notes

* = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < 0.001$ ^a Heterosexuals: Never Married \neq Married; Married \neq Divorced.^b Lesbian & Gay: Never Married \neq Divorced, Married \neq Divorced; Heterosexuals: Never Married \neq Married.^c Lesbian & Gay: Never Married \neq Divorced, Married \neq Divorced; Heterosexuals: Never Married \neq Married.^d Heterosexuals: Never Married \neq Married.^e Lesbian & Gay: Never Married \neq Married; Heterosexuals: Never Married \neq Married; Married \neq Divorced.^f Lesbian & Gay: Never Married \neq Divorced, Married \neq Divorced; Heterosexuals: Never Married \neq Married; Married \neq Divorced.^g Heterosexuals: Never Married \neq Married, Never Married \neq Divorced.

heterosexism in society. Thus, married heterosexuals combined a greater awareness of discrimination against sexual minorities with the tendency to protest less against the heterosexual privilege they acknowledge.

Marriage also displayed some significant impacts on lesbian and gay individuals. The largest main marriage effect was for warmth toward lesbians and gay men $\{F(2, 72) = 24.64, p = < .001\}$, but there were also significant marital differences for thinking heterosexism is serious $\{F(2, 72) = 8.16, p = < .01\}$, seeing sexism as dangerous $\{F(2, 72) = 3.24, p = < .05\}$, and warmth toward feminists $\{F(2, 72) = 3.66, p = < .05\}$. Unlike heterosexuals, the role of marriage often had a liberalizing effect for lesbians and gay men. Indeed, married lesbians and gay men had the highest means on all of the feminist measures, and they were more likely to join LGBT and feminist social movements. Twice the liberalizing effect of marriage was statistically significant from not married sexual minorities in the post-hoc calculations (considering sexism detrimental and warmth toward feminists). Not married lesbians and gay men presented the most liberal tendency for only one variable (warmth toward lesbians/gays), and the process of getting a divorce seemed to drive a wedge between members of feminist and the lesbian and gay communities (divorced lesbians and gay men were more perturbed by lesbians and gay men and feminists than not married and married sexual minorities).

Discussion

The institution of marriage has many fans and critics. Feminist activists and scholars often suggest that the private sphere and marriage specifically are places of oppression for women (England, 2010). Traditional practices of marriage often curtail female autonomy, make women financially dependent on men, place undue burdens on women's caretaking roles, and increase potential violence in the home (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Marriage for lesbians and gay men also has its share of critics on the right and on the left. Conservatives wanted to keep the benefits of marriage to themselves, and queer critics feared the regressive and assimilationist aspects of marriage (Duggan, 2003). Some marriage critics warned that the acceptance of same-sex marriage would co-opt the transformative possibilities of LGBT social movements, and others warned that the lesbian and gay spouses would turn into complacent citizens who blindly embrace an oppressive status quo (Duggan, 2003). Equality activists concede that same-sex marriage valorizes romantic couples, domesticity, and the reproductive nuclear family, but they argue that marriage equality brings many financial protections and that sexual minorities may be able to create more egalitarian households (Bernstein & Taylor, 2013).

Existing family scholarship often highlights the inward and interpersonal benefits of same-sex marriage. Married sexual minorities seem to

have better physical and mental health (Kurdek, 2004), increased wealth (Hirschl, Altobelli, & Rank, 2003), and somewhat equitable relationships (Goldberg, 2013). Far less research examines the political consequences of same-sex marriage, and these few studies present inconsistent results. Some studies suggest that same-sex marriages increase commitments to social justice matters (Rothblum et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2009), while other studies claims that same-sex marriages reduce community ties and political engagements (Ocobock, 2018; Swank, 2018b)

This study examined the political consequences of marriage for lesbians and gay men and heterosexuals. In initiating a quantitative analysis, the study turned to 2010–2012 version of American National Election Survey. ANES offers a large random sample of adults from all ages, sexual identities, and regions of the United States. ANES improves upon studies that restrict their analysis to college students (Friedman & Ayres, 2013) and people with the same sexual identity (Rothblum et al., 2008).

The analysis above first showed how sexual identities impacted a person's stance toward LGBT and feminist liberation. The data revealed a dramatic "sexuality gap" in matters of sexuality politics as lesbians and gay men were more inclined than heterosexuals to see discrimination against sexual minorities, to have warm feelings toward sexual minorities, and to join protests for LGBT rights (Andersen & Jennings, 2010; Swank, 2018a). While there are heterosexual allies and conservative sexual minorities, these individuals are rare and counter the trends of greater LGBT activism among lesbians and gay men.

However, this study challenges the claim of a sexuality gap in a feminist awareness and politics (Andersen & Jennings, 2010; Duncan, 1999; Friedman & Ayres, 2013; White, 2006). Sexual identities did not predict a person's recognition of institutionalized sexism or support of feminist efforts to challenge these sexist practices. It is possible that gay men and lesbians break from traditional gender roles in their families, or that they express feminist commitments in ways other than joining the "women's movement," but this lack of sexuality-based differences in feminist commitments aligns with studies that have larger random samples (Harnois, 2015, 2017; Swank 2018a). Clearly, future researchers should not assume exposure to heterosexism automatically translates into greater feminist activism. Scholars should also explore whether lesbians are more feminist than gay men (Grollman, 2019; Swank, 2018b).

Marriage is often seen as a reinforcing traditional gender expectations. This claim was partly confirmed by this study. When looking at the entire sample, married people generally favor social conservatism and the status quo (Bolzendahl & Myers 2004; Fahs 2007; Harnois 2015). However, when the sample was separated into lesbian/gay and heterosexual subgroups, a very different picture emerged. Although this analysis showed that marriage was the norm among heterosexuals (59%) and somewhat atypical among

lesbians and gay men (16%), it also revealed sexuality-specific results for marital status, as marriage routinely moved heterosexuals into conservative camps while marriage had no such effect on lesbians and gay men.

Marriage typically had an inverse relationship for heterosexuals and sexual minorities. One of these was found in preferred political labels. Marital status was irrelevant to the political identities of lesbians and gay men while married heterosexuals were drawn to a conservative moniker (Corrigall-Brown, 2012; Stoker & Jennings, 1995). Other diverging marital effects were also found. For instance, married heterosexuals expressed greater discomfort with gay men and lesbians while married lesbians (Elder & Greene, 2012; Sherkat, 2017; Woodford et al., 2013) and gay men displayed greater fondness toward other sexual minorities. Marriage also had incompatible sexuality effects for perceptions of sexism and feminist commitments. Married heterosexuals generally minimized sexism and recoiled from feminists (Stout et al., 2017) while married lesbians and gay men identified more gender discrimination and showed stronger feminist affinities. Marriage also dampened a tendency of heterosexuals to join LGBT and feminist social movements while it cultivated increased pro-LGBT and feminist activism among lesbians and gay men (Rothblum et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2009).

There were a few variables that had more idiosyncratic results. Married heterosexuals were more aware of heterosexism than single heterosexuals were. However, this greater recognition of heterosexual privilege did not inspire greater tendencies to fight heterosexual advantages as married heterosexuals did less pro-LGBT activism than single heterosexuals. This suggests a great deal of privilege-hording among married heterosexuals, as married heterosexuals were both more aware and more complicit of heterosexual privilege than single or divorced heterosexuals.

In summarizing the findings, marriage lacks a universal political effect across sexual identities. When presenting a conditional impact, marriage only cultivates greater gender and social conservatism among heterosexuals. Married heterosexuals showed a broad tendency to call themselves conservative, to recoil from lesbians and gay men and feminists, to discount the extent of sexism and homophobia, and to refrain from feminist and LGBT social movements. In contrast to queer worries, marriage failed to suppress lesbian and gay liberalism as married lesbians and gay men saw more discrimination and joined more pro-LGBT and feminist social movements than sexual minorities in other marital categories. These findings suggest that marriage creates a different trajectory in terms of political beliefs and behavior for people of different sexual identities, and scholars need to be suspicious of a one-model-fits-all approach to understanding the impact of marriage on pro-LGBT and feminist commitments.

Future research should build on the results presented in this chapter. For example, there are some ways to improve the research design

of this study. The activist measures were somewhat nebulous because people may not agree as to what behaviors indicate the joining of a social movement. Some people may restrict social movement participation to attending a protest, doing a gay kiss-in, or giving money to a feminist politician while others may see themselves joining a feminist or LGBT social movement in their day-to-day interactions with others (making feminist art, creating queer restaurants, modifying language practices, etc.).

The categorization and measure of sexualities is equally complicated. A person's sexuality can be determined by a person's attractions, behaviors, and identities (Umberson et al., 2015). This study took the identity approach, but a focus on sexual attractions or behaviors might produce different results (Hoy & London, 2018). For example, there is a line of "bud sex" and "dude sex" studies, which suggests that men who have sex with men embrace hegemonic masculinity more than men who call themselves gays (Schnabel, 2018; Silva & Whaley, 2018; for a review, see Hoy & London, 2018). My measures also treated sexual identities as a static feature in which people know that they are either heterosexual or not. This certainty and stability of sexual identities may match the experiences of many people, but there still is a sizable chunk of the population who experience a more sexual fluidity and/or ambiguity over the life course (Katz-Wise, 2015). It is also possible that there are gender divisions within each sexual identity, and scholars should see if lesbians and gay men differ in their support of feminist agendas (Grollman, 2019; Swank, 2018b). Finally, the responses for sexual identities are not totally exhaustive. Some people identify as asexual while other people prefer a queer or bisexual label. Such labels might matter because bisexual marry less often than lesbians and gay men (McCabe, 2019) and queer individuals often display more radical or transformative stances on gender and sexuality practices that people who call themselves lesbian/gay (Worthen, 2020b).

The measurement of marital status can also be enhanced. ANES did not ask the gender of one's spouse or former spouse, so it is impossible to know how many lesbians and gays were either married or divorced from people of the same gender (Hernandez et al., 2011). A current marital status does not trace a person's marital history. It is impossible to know how often a person was married and if the person has ever been in same-sex marriage at an earlier time. In addition, the ANES measure did not distinguish between people who are intending to get a divorced, recently separated, or cohabiting with a partner. This is important since the reasons and rates for divorce vary by sexual identity with self-identified lesbians and gays leaving opposite sex-marriages faster than any pairing (London & Hoy, 2021). The measure for marital status also overlooks the reasons to get married or the attitudes/comments/conduct of a partner. Having a feminist or Tea party husband/wife, being a stay-at-home mom, or the amount of intimate/sexual

violence can alter the amount and type of political activism for people who are in marriages (Stoker & Jennings, 1995).

Even with these methodological caveats, the data suggests a profound sexuality difference in the ways that marriage effects the political sentiments and activism of individuals. For activists, this study suggests that internal squabbles over the problems of same-sex marriage might be a distraction. Same-sex marriages were somewhat inoculated from the trappings of heterosexual marriages, and sexual minorities have much bigger enemies in Republican political leadership, new regressive transgender laws, and increase in hate crimes against sexual minorities. For researchers, this study reveals the importance of attending to sexual identities when studying the links of marriage to political activism. This means that sexual identities and marital status must be asked about in tandem for surveys, and research designs should include a large enough sample of sexual minorities to make adequate comparisons across sexual identities.

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