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Exploring The Determinants Of Gay Rights Policies At The State Level: A Mixed Methods Approach

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STATE LEVEL: A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

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2013

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STATE LEVEL: A MIXED METHODS APPROACH

by

DANIEL ELTON CALL, B.A.

THESIS

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Abstract

Much of the literature on gay rights has focused broadly on identifying the causal factors that influence general public perceptions. To date, although scholars have conducted case studies at the state-level or looked at aggregate public opinion trends and their effects at the national level, no work has empirically examined state-level gay rights trends across numerous states. This study fills that gap by assessing the key relationships on the issue of same-sex marriage at the state-level, both systemically with aggregate data and across key states. Using 2007 data from the SurveyUSA polling firm, the American Community Survey (US Census Bureau 2009), and the Pew Forum's (2009) U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, I first employ OLS regression models to conduct systematic state-level analyses. Next, I qualitatively assess the impact of the major variables at the state level using Alabama, Minnesota, and Vermont as best-test cases. This type of mixed methods approach is practical because policy disputes over gay rights are often decided at the state level. For my theoretical framework, I proposed that for 2007, southern region, religious adherence, and a higher percentage of Blacks and Latinos would produce more conservative perceptions on same-sex marriage while education, and age (youth), liberal ideology, and Democratic Party identification would produce more liberal views. My findings provides a new contribution to the literature on gay rights concerning state-level insights which are highly applicable for practitioners, particularly for key advocacy groups concerned about how best how to concentrate their limited resources in pushing for reforms across key states where public debates are most intense.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Tables	viii
Introduction: Gay Rights Issues in Historical Perspective	1
Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT)	1
From DADT to Same-Sex Marriage.....	3
Looking Ahead: Same-Sex Marriage at the Federal versus State Level	4
Literature Review.....	6
Age	10
Social Connections: Knowing Someone Gay	11
Polling and Election Day	12
Institutions.....	14
Liberalization	15
Theoretical Framework.....	16
Age (Youth)	16
Race/Ethnicity (Blacks and Latinos)	16
Education	17
Gender.....	17
Religious Adherence	18
Southern Region.....	18
Ideology	18
Partisanship	19
Methodology.....	21
Data	22
Dependent Variables	22
Independent Variables	23

Quantitative Analyses	26
Results: Determinants of Support for (and Opposition to) Same-Sex Marriage	26
Case Studies	30
Minnesota.....	31
Vermont	35
Alabama	38
Conclusion	41
Looking Forward: Avenues for Future Studies	42
Walking the Talk: Practitioner Applicability.....	48
References	51
Appendix 1: Survey USA Methodological Statement	58
Appendix 2: Quantitative Analyses Results	59
Vita.....	61

List of Tables

Table 1. Determinants of Support for Same-sex Marriage at the State-Level.....	59
Table 2. Determinants of Opposition to Same-sex Marriage at the State-Level	60

Introduction: Gay Rights Issues in Historical Perspective

In the current public political discourse there are perhaps few issues more emotionally charged and salient than gay rights, particularly when it comes to debates over same-sex marriage. From the debate over the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy to President Clinton signing but later opposing the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) to President Barack Obama becoming the first sitting commander-in-chief to endorse same-sex marriage to the recent Boy Scouts of America controversy, these contests of ideas have captured the hearts and attention of many Americans. With same-sex marriage becoming more salient and more evenly split along partisan and ideological lines, this issue deserves more scholarly attention and careful analysis than it is currently receiving.

DON’T ASK DON’T TELL (DADT)

The ban against homosexuals serving in the U.S. military had been in effect in various degrees as a stated policy since World War II and by implication since the Revolutionary War. A 1957 Navy report effectively summed up the opinions of many in the armed forces when it said, “Homosexuality is wrong, it is evil and it is to be branded as such” (Terry 1999, 347). This policy remained in effect without significant controversy through many presidential administrations, both Democrat and Republican.

That changed in 1992 when presidential candidate Bill Clinton campaigned on a promise to end discrimination in the military over the issue of sexual orientation. After his election there emerged a bipartisan push in Congress to end the ban, which was led by Democrat Representative Barney Frank of Massachusetts and former Senator and Republican Presidential candidate Barry Goldwater of Arizona. In fact, it was Goldwater who famously said, “You don’t need to be straight to shoot straight” (Goldwater 1993). Amid the bipartisan effort, discussion over lifting the ban began to accelerate. Amid intense debate, significant opposition arose from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, members of Congress, and the public. Consequently, President Clinton backed off his campaign promise for full repeal of the ban. Instead, a compromise emerged

known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” for which Clinton allowed Congress to ban openly homosexuals personnel from serving in the military. Clinton then issued an executive order that effectively ended the policy allowing military brass to ask about sexual orientation in military applications and in service. The two directives taken together meant that as long as service members did not voluntarily express their homosexual or bisexual preferences or practices, they could serve freely in the military. The policy also set high standards regarding the amount and type of evidence needed to initiate an investigation into a service member’s sexuality, and also did not allow the military to pursue investigations without direct and credible knowledge of homosexual or bisexual preferences or actions.

The DADT policy again came to the forefront of the national consciousness during the 2000 presidential election. During the Democratic Primary, both Al Gore and Bill Bradley supported the full repeal of DADT, although the official Democratic Party platform was silent on the issue. When George W. Bush won the election and became the 43rd President, he found himself in a difficult position on the issue. On the one hand, reverting the pre-Clinton outright ban was difficult because of his desire to avoid negative press. On the other hand, not reverting to the pre-Clinton ban would disappoint many of his social conservative constituents. The situation was further complicated given that his own Secretary of State, Colin Powell, was among DADT’s creators (Campbell 2001). Ultimately, Bush chose to preserve DADT as it stood in the Clinton Administration by taking no substantive action.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Senator Barack Obama supported a full repeal of DADT, thereby echoing Al Gore’s position from eight years earlier. Despite having large majorities in both houses of Congress, the all-out push for repeal of DADT did not begin until late 2010. The bill for repeal of DADT came as an amendment to the annual Defense Authorization Bill with the caveat that certain key officials in the military had to certify that allowing homosexuals to serve openly would not harm military effectiveness or readiness. Most Republicans in Congress opposed the repeal of DADT because they thought that the Democrats were trying, as Rep. Mike Pence stated, “to advance a liberal social agenda” (Herszenhorn and

Hulse 2010). Despite the objections by many Republicans and several filibusters led by Senator John McCain, the measure was successfully attached as an amendment and the bill was eventually passed by a vote of 65-31, with eight Republicans joining the vote for repeal (Hulse 2010). This victory for gay rights activists concerning DADT opened the door for revisiting another issue: the debate over same-sex marriage.

FROM DADT TO SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

When it comes to same-sex marriage, the issue first came into focus in the early 1970s. In 1972, two gay activists from the University of Minnesota sued the city of Minneapolis because they were denied a marriage license on the grounds that the city violated their constitutional rights. The case *Baker v. Nelson* went to the Minnesota Supreme Court where the court ruled that limiting marriage to one man and one woman did not violate the U.S. Constitution. The ruling was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court where it was dismissed for a lack of a substantial federal question (Gumbel 2009).

Over the years, the issue died down somewhat until it made headlines once again in the 1990s through another court case, *Baehr v. Lewin*. In that case, three gay couples sued the Director of Health in Hawaii, demanding that he issue them marriage licenses, contrary to state law. The case made its way to the Supreme Court of Hawaii where it was ruled that the state's statute prohibiting same-sex marriage was in violation of the state's constitution, but stayed the order until the state could justify its position (Oshiro 1996). In the meantime, Hawaii amended its constitution to give power to the state legislature to preserve traditional marriage. The legislature did so shortly thereafter (Niesse 2009). This case galvanized opposition to same-sex marriage and set the stage for federal intervention on the issue.

During the 1990s, amid the debate over DADT, a major milestone in the fight over same-sex marriage came with the enactment of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996. The measure effectively defined marriage as between a man and woman at the federal level for tax, immigration and benefits issues, and also allowed states to not recognize same-sex marriages

from other states. Some liberal Democrats, such as Senator Ted Kennedy objected to the measure as homophobic called it the “Endangered Republican Candidates Act” whereas Republicans and many moderate Democrats saw the measure as necessary to preserve federalism in should states choose to legalize same-sex marriage in the future (Geidner 2011). The measure passed with wide margins in both houses of congress and was signed by President Clinton on September 21, perhaps feeling the pressure of the conservative public opinion and its effect on his own reelection campaign.¹

Years later, in the midst of the 2008 presidential campaign, when asked by Pastor Rick Warren about his views of marriage, then- Senator Barack Obama said, “I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman. For me as a Christian, it is a sacred union. You know, God is in the mix,” later adding that he was, however, a supporter of civil unions (Obama 2008). After his election and into late 2010, Obama admitted that his views on same-sex marriage were “evolving” and stated that he no longer believed that civil unions were enough. During his 2012 reelection campaign Obama suddenly came out in favor of same-sex marriage due to a slip of tongue by vice president Joe Biden, saying that he was “absolutely comfortable” with same-sex marriage (Parsons 2012). Biden apologized to President Obama for the remark, and Obama himself acknowledged that it “came from the heart” (Parsons 2012). Obama then fully embraced same-sex marriage and often spoke in favor of it. Since the aftermath of the repeal of DADT, the debate over same-sex marriage has gained increased national attention and momentum amid policy circles.

LOOKING AHEAD: SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AT THE FEDERAL VERSUS STATE LEVEL

Since the federal government codified its ban of same-sex marriages when it passed the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 and attempts to federalize the issue with a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in all states failed in subsequent sessions of Congress

¹ More recently, in 2009, Clinton switched his position and announced that he support same-sex marriage, and in 2013 said that DOMA was unconstitutional and should be overturned by the Supreme Court (Baker 2013).

from 2004 to 2006, the issue of same-sex marriage has effectively become a state issue, and all of the electoral battles over the issue have been levied at the state level since then. At the same time, there remains a possibility that the definition of marriage could suddenly become a federal issue rather than state. Supreme Court cases such as *Perry v. Hollingsworth* and *United States v. Windsor* have had the potential to redefine marriage at both the federal and state levels. Most recently, the Supreme Court has begun deliberating over the issue of same-sex marriage since March of 2013 and could make a decision in the summer of 2013 that might affect the balance between state and federal policy making over the issue. Even so, much of the implementation of policy over same-sex marriage is expected to play out at the state level while public and legal debates over the issue are likely to continue for the next several years. Unless the status quo changes significantly due to such court cases, the most meaningful aggregate analysis of the variables that drive the politics of gay rights, and same-sex marriage in particular, will likely remain at the state level.

Literature Review

To date, the literature on gay rights issues, including same-sex marriage, seems to have taken one of two approaches. The first approach generally taken examines the influence of key factors in an aggregate nationwide context and their effect on public opinion concerning gay rights policies. The second approach generally considers the impact of these identified variables when applied to a particular state. Many scholars use this approach when seeking to draw inferences from statewide votes on same-sex marriage, such as California's Proposition 8. I review key works from each of these approaches before introducing my proposed research design.

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS AND GAY RIGHTS ISSUES

Although the literature on gay rights is relatively new, there are a number of key studies that provide a strong foundation of knowledge for further research. In one study, Lewis (2009) takes the aggregate national-level approach and seeks to establish a link between an individual's beliefs about the origins of homosexuality, be they biological or linked to human choice, and support for LGBT rights. Applying attribution theory, he posits that individuals are more likely to support LGBT rights if they believe that sexual orientation is biological and not chosen. He uses thousands of responses from 24 national surveys to show that there is a strong link between judgments about the origins of homosexuality and support for a broad array of LGBT rights, even after controlling for a variety of factors.

Lewis suggests that an expected movement of public opinion toward a biological basis of understanding for homosexual orientation could be key to moving policy in a more liberal direction in years to come. Lewis further argues that those who are better educated and thus more exposed to scientific research and also have personal relationships with homosexuals should be more likely to believe that homosexuality is innate, thereby leading them to be more supportive of LGBT rights. However, on these assertions he finds mixed and contradictory results. For example, he finds that growth in individuals believing that homosexuality is innate

did not increase after the media heavily covered scientific research to that end in the early 1990s. He also finds that heterosexuals who believe homosexuality is due to upbringing and environment are just as likely to oppose LGBT rights than those who believe it is pure choice. One major weakness of Lewis's study, which he acknowledges, is that he is unable to establish the direction of causality. Also, because of the mixed nature of his findings, he is unable to ascertain whether or not political and or religious beliefs about LGBT rights influence judgments on origins of homosexuality.

Beatty and Walter's (1984) study looks at tolerance of marginalized groups, including homosexuals, among different religious denominations and among different frequencies of attendance at religious services. Using the aggregate national-level approach, the authors use three different surveys between 1976 and 1980 with the implicit assumption that tolerance did not change significantly in this four year period. These authors disaggregate religious denominations to better investigate the subtle differences between denominations. They found that Jews, the non-religious, and mainstream protestant congregations to be among the most tolerant. They also found tolerance to be the highest among those who attend religious services most infrequently, even after controlling for socio-economic status. The relationship between religiosity and tolerance supports other studies showing similar effects (Cochran and Beeghley 1991; Cochran, et al. 2001). Curiously, the authors also found higher levels of tolerance among Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witness worshipers than was expected before hand, a notable surprise given their religious doctrine. The authors theorize that these denominations, along with the Jews, may have high levels of tolerance because of historical persecutions.

Olson, Cage, and Harrison (2006) use a similar national-level approach and seek to confirm Beatty and Walter's findings by exploring how religion affects public opinion on gay rights using a single nationally representative survey they conducted in the spring of 2004. They operationalize religion in terms of religious affiliation as well as degree of religious adherence independent of affiliation. Their dependent variable was more disaggregated than previous studies as they measured public opinion of gay rights in terms of public opinion of civil unions,

same-sex marriages, and an amendment to the federal constitution banning same-sex marriage, which was salient at the time but has since ceased to be a serious avenue for pertinent interest groups. In order to isolate this relationship they control for gender, education, age, marital status, opinions about the secularization of society, and those that listed moral values as one of their top concerns. Their analysis builds on previous works about religion and gay rights by using a national representative survey rather than a smaller unrepresentative survey and by allowing for more nuanced subdivisions of religious denominations. Thiers was the first study that examined the dependent variables in such a manner.

The authors find that for all three dependent variables, religion was a significant predictor of attitudes. In fact, the religious variables outperformed various demographical variables in the models. Specifically, they find that non-protestants—particularly Jews and the religiously unaffiliated—have less opposition to gay rights than protestants. They also find that religiosity is significantly and positively related to opposition to gay rights. Curiously, the survey findings indicate there was more public opposition to civil unions than same-sex marriage. This is counterintuitive and perhaps suggests that respondents were confused about the differences between civil unions and same-sex marriage.

GENDER

Herek (2002) looks at the apparent gender gap in attitudes about homosexuals and gay-rights in general, also using the national-level approach. He uses a single 1999 national survey to assess the relationship. Like other earlier authors, Herek finds there is a significant gender gap, with males being significantly less likely to have positive attitudes about homosexuals or support various gay rights proposals. In addition to finding support for the gender gap as scholars understood it at the time he also finds evidence for a still deeper level of the gender gap when he disaggregates the concept of heterosexuals. He finds that heterosexual men have significantly more negative views of gay men than lesbian women, and therefore were significantly less supportive of rights for gay men than for lesbian women. He also found a similar, though less

pronounced, pattern among heterosexual women. He also found that 48% of heterosexual men felt “somewhat” or “very” uncomfortable around gay men, compared to only 28% of heterosexual females. He also found a similar seven percentage gap for lesbian women. It appears from Herek’s research that a significant amount of opposition to gay rights may be heterosexual male aversion to male homosexuality. Herek hypothesizes that this phenomenon may be linked to male masculinity vis-à-vis feeling threatened by the perceived feminization of homosexual males.

RACE/ETHNICITY

The scholarly literature on the racial component of opinions on homosexuality also utilizes both national-level and single-state approaches. One national-level study showed that Black disapproval of homosexuality was widespread but did not appear to be more prevalent than White disapproval (Herek and Capitanio 1995). These findings effectively supported some early studies (Klassen et al. 1989; Glen and Weaver 1979; Marsiglio 1993; but see Ernst et al. 1991).

In one study, Egan and Sherrill (2010) introduced this racial variable when conducting an important single state study of Proposition 8 in California. They found that Blacks voted in favor of the amendment in higher proportions than other racial groups but not to the tune of 70 percent as initially reported by the National Election Pool (L.A. Times 2008). They find that when they controlled for religious adherence, as measured by frequency of church attendance, Black support for Proposition 8 was much lower. They found this to be attributable to the fact that 57 percent of Blacks attend church at least once a week, compared to just 42 percent of Whites that do so. Another study confirms Egan and Sherrill’s findings and concludes that even if Black and Latino turnout had been at normal levels, Proposition 8 would have still passed with a majority of Californian voters (Abrajano 2010).

Another national-level study by Gregory Lewis (2003) shows that overall between 1973 and 2003 Blacks disapproved of homosexuality in general over Whites by four to eight percent.

This comes after he controls for religiosity, demographics, and religion. Interestingly enough, Lewis does not find adequate differences between Black and White opinions on sodomy laws, employment discrimination and gay civil liberty laws, thus the differences seems to be localized to same-sex marriage. However, he shows that religion, age, gender, and education all have a greater impact on attitudes of Whites of homosexuality than Blacks (G. B. Lewis 2003).

Many of the same articles that measured Black influence on the passage of Proposition 8 also found a similar, although less intense, effect for Latino voters. Like Blacks, Latinos are seen as more against gay rights, and same-sex marriage in particular, than Whites due to their increased levels of religious adherence (Egan and Sherrill 2010). While the majority of Latinos are Catholic, a growing number of them identify as Evangelical Christian. Neither of these groups is particularly open to same-sex marriage (Abrajano 2010).

EDUCATION

Several studies in the existing literature focus on the differences in education levels and attitudes about homosexuality using the national-level approach (Herek and Capitanio 1995; Treas 2002; Ohlander et al. 2005). These studies find that those with higher education levels tend to have a more liberal view of homosexuality. Ohlander et al (2005) explores the explanations associated with this relationship, that education increases mental sophistication and complex reasoning, thereby increasing the ability of individuals to evaluate new ideas, such as homosexuality and gay rights, and that education may promote tolerance and acceptance of homosexual relations by teaching support of nonconformity. They find support for both explanations. Loftus (2001), for instance, posits that the demographic changes toward greater education levels in recent decades serves as a significant predictor of the recent trend of more positive views of homosexuality.

AGE

Another segment of the existing literature emphasizes the role of age in opinions about gay rights and same-sex marriage in particular. One study by Lewis and Gossett (2008)

examined the changes in attitudes toward same-sex marriage in California from 1975 to 2006 using the single state approach. They found a significant trend in favor of liberalization. They also found that cohort replacement accounted for nearly half of the trend. Other studies have shown greater opposition among older age groups as opposed to younger age groups utilizing the national-level approach (Loftus 2001; Egan and Sherrill 2009; Lewis 2003). The explanations for this are likely because the trend toward sexual conservatism with increasing age and because of changing socialization patterns for younger generations. Also, increasingly positive portrayals of LGBT individuals in the media may influence opinion among younger generations, as these cohorts consume media in greater amounts than other age groups (Levina, Waldo and Fitzgerald 2006).

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS: KNOWING SOMEONE GAY

Lewis (2011) also studied the relationship between knowing someone gay and supporting gay rights using a similar national-level approach as his 2009 study. He uses individual data from 27 national surveys between 1983 and 2011 to assess the relationship. He considers different directions of causality in his study, with a particular focus on exploring whether knowing gays increases individuals support for gay rights, or if supporting gay rights increases the chances for an individual to know someone that is gay.

Lewis divides his independent variable by type of relationship with an LGBT member; he tests for family relationship, close personal friendship, and acquaintanceship/co-worker. He finds that all types of relationships with a gay person increases support for gay rights, but he finds that the strongest relationship occurs in instances where an individual has a close personal friendship with a gay person. Lewis also divides the dependent variable by different gay rights policies and finds that the pattern is the same regardless of the specific policy. He also shows that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables has not changed significantly in any of the years since 1983.

Lewis finds this relationship to be quite strong for all of the control groups he tested. He also found however, that the effects of knowing someone gay on support for gay rights tends to be strongest for those groups which are already predisposed to support gay rights, such as women, liberals, the young, and the less religious. The exception to this trend is education; those with higher levels of education are swayed less by knowing someone gay than those that are less educated, suggesting that those with less education are more impressionable.

POLLING AND ELECTION DAY

Egan (2010) looked specifically at state ballot contests on same-sex marriage to try to explain the discrepancies between polling data and outcomes on Election Day from 1998 to 2010 using an interesting hybrid of the national-level approach and the single-state approach. He used data from 167 different polls in the six months prior to these ballot contests. He finds no significant change in voter intentions during the campaigns, indicating that campaigns had very little to no effect on changing voter intentions. By comparing polling data throughout the campaign to the final vote share on Election Day, Egan finds that pollsters underestimate the vote for traditional marriage by an average of seven percent while accurately predicting the vote in favor of same-sex marriage. He also finds that this trend does not change through the course of the election.

Egan finds no evidence for respondents misleading pollsters to avoid being politically incorrect. Egan argues that such a trend would be strongest for states with larger LGBT communities because, as his logic goes, traditional marriage supporters would be more hesitant to express their true opinions where norms of tolerance are the strongest. In finding no significant trend between states with small LGBT communities vis-à-vis those with large communities, he concludes that there is no evidence for such an explanation. However, with such a flawed proxy in his model for propensity to mislead pollsters, it is difficult to take Egan's conclusion at face value. His proxy assumes too many things for which there is insufficient evidence; that large LGBT communities increase tolerance norms, traditional marriage

supporters would be tempted to lie about their opinions in the presence of such communities, and so on. Aside from this flawed proxy, Egan concludes that such a trend of misleading pollsters should be growing over time as the media and society become more accepting of gay rights. Instead he found the opposite—the gap between polls and the result on Election Day have grown smaller over time, not larger.

Egan also claims that he finds no evidence that voter confusion is the cause of the discrepancy between the polls and the results on Election Day. He claims this based on his finding that polls do not become better predictors of the final result as the campaign wears on. This indicates that voters do not learn to distinguish the electoral choices better as a result of the campaign. He reasons that if voter confusion were the cause, voters were confused regardless of the campaign, an assertion not outside the realm of possibility.

Lewis and Gossett (2011) later conducted a study that builds off Egan's 2010 study that looks at the significant disconnect between polls prior to Election Day and election results specifically for California's Proposition 8, this time using the single-state approach. They test four hypotheses as possible explanations to attempt to explain this disparity; that voters mislead pollsters out of fear of being politically incorrect, that individuals who were against same-sex marriage but opposed amending the state constitution later changed their minds, that the anti-same-sex marriage campaign was more effective than their counterparts, and that respondents were confused about the meaning of Proposition 8 and more accurately stated their opinions as they became more educated by the campaigns.

Like Egan's study, the authors find little evidence for voters misleading pollsters. When Proposition 8 polls asked a separate question about whether respondents favored legalizing same-sex marriage, more respondents claimed they opposed same-sex marriage than favored Proposition 8, indicating confusion over the meaning of the proposition. The authors also found little evidence that there was any hesitation for voters about amending the state constitution to ban same-sex marriage. They also find little evidence the Proposition 8 campaign had any effect

on opinions Californians held about same-sex marriage, as support was as high close to Election Day in 2008 as it was in any of the three previous years.

The authors also found key points of confusion among respondents. In one poll, 14% of those that favored same-sex marriage also favored Proposition 8, whereas more than 22% of those that opposed same-sex marriage also opposed Proposition 8. With no logical explanation for this relationship, the authors conclude that the discrepancy is due to confusion. They also find that higher levels of education reduce the probability of this confusion, with a two percent decrease in the probability of confusion with each year increase in education. Since education was a significant variable for predicting support of same-sex marriage, this may explain why confusion was more prevalent for voters opposing same-sex marriage voters than those supporting same-sex marriage voters.

INSTITUTIONS

Hume (2011) provides an interesting look at the propensity for states to ratify pro-traditional marriage constitutional amendments, using the hybrid national-level and single-state level approach by looking only at the states that have enacted same-sex marriage constitutional amendments. His contribution to the literature is that he looks at the institutional explanations that govern the ratification of such amendments in addition to the policy explanations that other scholars examine. He hypothesizes that state-level institutionalism, in particular the capacity of the state courts to rule in favor of same-sex marriage, positively affects the propensity for adoption of pro-traditional marriage amendments. Using event history analysis, he finds that state institutions affect the adoption of such amendments but interestingly have no effect on the initial consideration of such amendments. His findings help explain why states adopt constitutional measures barring same-sex marriage when nearly all of those states already barred those relationships by statute.

LIBERALIZATION

Lewis and Gossett (2008) take the single state approach when looking at the recent trend toward the acceptance of homosexual relations across the board by testing the case of California. They look specifically at which demographic groups are changing their attitudes the most and whether demographic changes in the electorate are responsible for the trend toward liberalization. They look at six polls conducted in California from 1985 to 2006 to assess the apparent trend.

They find a significant trend of individuals changing their minds in a liberal direction on homosexuality among every demographic group, though the strength of the trend varies from group to group. They also find that the net change is strongest for liberals, strong partisan Democrats, those with gay or lesbian friends, and those for whom religion is unimportant. They conclude that individual attitude changes can account for half of the trend toward liberalization. They find the rest of the growth of attitudes toward homosexual relations and gay rights can be explained by cohort replacement. They find therefore that differences in attitudes on homosexuality and gay rights among the two main political parties were negligible in 1985 but are highly polarized today.

The methodologies used in all of the studies mentioned above generally follow the two approaches outlined in the introduction. Some of the studies use the national-level approach by utilizing nationwide surveys to make inferences about a single variable or set of variables. Other studies look at how the variables interact by applying them to a single high profile state, California for example. Two studies in particular combine elements of the two approaches by focusing on one phenomenon for a subset of states (Egan 2010; Hume 2011). In Egan's case he looks only at the discrepancies between polling data and vote totals, in Hume's case he looks at the effect of institutions on vote totals. My unique approach builds off of Egan's and Hume's work but instead of looking only at a certain phenomenon, I look at the relevant variables across numerous states.

Theoretical Framework

Given the key variables identified in the literature and the findings therein, I will be testing the effect that age, race/ethnicity, education, gender, religious adherence, geographic region, ideology, and party affiliation have on public support for (and opposition to) same-sex marriage. Generally speaking, in accordance with a number of key findings extracted from previous studies, I expect that state-level opinion over same-sex marriage has much to do with a population's overall level of liberalization brought on by over time historical experiences and socialization processes. Although I am not able to test all of the relationships addressed in previous works (e.g., election-related variables, institutional factors, knowing someone gay, etc.), the data I have collected does provide a platform for testing most of the key variables noted above across states. Below I outline each of the key factors I will include in my models and my expectations concerning their proposed effects on same-sex marriage perceptions.

AGE (YOUTH)

With regards to age, scholars have found that younger people tend to favor same-sex marriage more than older baseline generations because they are less bound to previous cultural traditions in regards to homosexuality and tend to be more open minded to changing the cultural status quos of the past (see Loftus 2001; Egan and Sherrill 2009; Lewis 2003). Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H1: The greater the population of youths in a state, the greater degree of support for same-sex marriage.

RACE/ETHNICITY (BLACKS AND LATINOS)

With regards to race/ethnicity, I expect that, relatively speaking, blacks and Latinos may be more likely to oppose same-sex marriage. As previous studies have shown, these voters in California in 2008 voted in greater proportions than any other race to ban same-sex marriage. Given that Black and Latino opposition to gay rights was apparent in California in 2008, it may also be the case for other states. Indeed, the literature has shown that, historically, Blacks and

Latinos in the United States generally tend to have more conservative views of gay rights, and in particular same-sex marriage, even after religion and religious adherence are controlled for (Lewis and Gossett 2008; Egan and Sherrill 2010). Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H2: The greater population of Blacks in a state, the lesser degree of support for same-sex marriage.

H3: The greater population of Latinos in a state, the lesser degree of support for same-sex marriage.

EDUCATION

With regards to education, previous works have shown that those with higher levels of education would be more likely to support same-sex marriage (Loftus 2001; Herek and Capitanio 1995). This is likely because formal education tends to expose people to others of opposing views and lifestyles. This may also be due to the claim that higher education is often seen as having a liberal bias, which would likely effect the political beliefs of students in higher education. Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H4: The greater the population levels of educated persons in a state, the greater the degree of support for same-sex marriage.

GENDER

With regards to gender, I expect females would support same-sex marriage more than the male baseline population. This is largely based on Herek's (2002) work, which found a significant gender gap in attitudes about homosexuality as well as support for gay rights proposals. He also found that much of the gender gap was traced to male disapproval of male homosexuality rather than female lesbianism. This may be linked to heterosexual males feeling that their masculinity is under threat by feminized gender roles they feel is common in male homosexuality. Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H5: The greater the population of males in a state, the lesser the degree of support for same-sex marriage.

RELIGIOUS ADHERENCE

With regards to religious adherence, I expect that the religiously adherent would more likely oppose same-sex marriage on average. Many studies have established strong evidence that religious adherence has a negative effect on individual views of gay rights (Olson et al. 2006; Beatty and Walter 1984; Cochran et al. 2004). Most organized religions have historically taught that homosexuality is immoral and therefore same-sex marriage by extension is undesirable. Thus, the more an individual attends religious services, the greater the likelihood that s/he will be influenced by such religious views regarding homosexuality. Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H6: The greater the population of religious adherents in a state, the lesser the degree of support for same-sex marriage.

SOUTHERN REGION

Apart from the aforementioned socio-economic variables, I will also examine the possibility of a regional element to gay rights. As it stands, nine states currently allow same-sex marriage, six of which are located in the Northeast (Maine New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts), while one is located in the Midwest (Iowa) and another is located in the Northwest (Washington). Only one state south of the Mason-Dixon Line currently allows same-sex marriage (Maryland). Thus, it seems that there is something unique about the southern region apart from the other variables that bodes ill for same-sex marriage. Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H7: If a state is located in the southern region, such state will be less likely to have a population that supports same-sex marriage.

IDEOLOGY

With regards to ideology, I expect conservatives are more likely to oppose same-sex marriage than liberals. In today's context, the political philosophy of most liberals in the United States is generally perceived as more likely to support gay rights, thereby more likely holding the

view that the government should have no interest in limiting the recognition of marriage to heterosexuals only. Accordingly, all the major goals of the gay rights movement should be supported, including same-sex marriage. By comparison, the philosophy of most modern-day conservatives echoes traditional Judeo-Christian thought that homosexuality is immoral and that the government should therefore not support gay rights, including those related to same-sex marriage. Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H8a: The greater population of liberal ideologues in a state, the greater the degree of support for same-sex marriage

H8b: The greater population of conservative ideologues in a state, the lesser the degree of support for same-sex marriage.

PARTISANSHIP

With regards to partisanship, I expect Democrats are more likely to support same-sex marriage than Republicans. Although the Democratic Party platform has evolved in regards to gay rights over the years, it has consistently been relatively more open towards gay rights issues and, in the last few years, has made particular strides towards greater support for same-sex marriage and other related issues. Looking back, the 2000 Democratic Party platform was silent on same-sex marriage, but by 2004 the Democratic Party platform stated marriage should be defined at the state level and opposed a Federal Marriage Amendment. Then, in 2008, the platform called for the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and the recognition of civil unions, but stopped short of calling for same-sex marriage. By 2012, The Democratic Party Platform called for recognition of same-sex marriage saying, “We support marriage equality and support the movement to secure equal treatment under law for same-sex couples” (Democratic Party 2012). It also went on to affirm support for a federal endorsement of same-sex marriage, in addition to state support (Democratic Party 2012). The Republican Party, on the other hand, has stayed consistent in opposing same-sex marriage. Whether partisans take cues from their

party's platform or set the direction of their party's platform, I expect individuals are closely aligned to the platform of the party they identify with. Accordingly, I hypothesize as follows:

H9a: The greater population of Democratic partisans in a state, the greater degree of support for same-sex marriage.

H9b: The greater population of Republican partisans in a state, the lesser degree of support for same-sex marriage.

Methodology

My research design is unique in that it looks at the relationship between the identified independent variables and their effect on opinions of same-sex marriage beyond the general national-level dynamics to the state-level; and not just for one state, but across many states. This is important because the interest group battles that rage over this issue take place almost exclusively at the state level. Using 2007 data from the SurveyUSA² polling firm, the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2009), and the Pew Forum's (2009) U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, I will first employ a number of OLS regression models to conduct a systematic state-level quantitative analyses. Next, I will qualitatively assess the impact of the major variables at the state level using Alabama, Minnesota, and Vermont as best-test cases. In particular, I chose Vermont as the liberal case where gay rights policies are entrenched, Alabama as the conservative case where gay rights policies have not yet been enacted in any significant way, and Minnesota as the moderate case where the gay rights policies are currently in transition. In particular, I expect that the factors of ideology and religious adherence may have, to date, effectively placed Vermont and Alabama out of reach for those seeking a change in gay right policies. Meanwhile, I expect the key variable to split down the middle in the case of Minnesota, effectively making it a key battle ground state for future electoral battles over gay rights.

In conducting my study, I hope to provide a new contribution to the literature on gay rights as well as new insights that are highly applicable for practitioners, particularly for key advocacy groups concerned about how best to concentrate their limited resources in pushing for reforms across key states where public debate is most heated. Indeed, both sides of key advocacy groups would be interested to know which variables portend electoral success or defeat within a state. For example, if southern culture turns out to be a significant variable impacting gay rights in a conservative direction, pro-gay rights groups such as the Human Rights Campaign may be best served by writing off the South in their state by state electoral strategy. Regardless

² SurveyUSA conducts true random-sample scientific telephone research (for more details, see <http://www.surveyusa.com>).

of one's views on gay rights, building scholarly knowledge on the determinants of gay rights policies at the state-level is useful for understanding the evolution of gay rights policies across the country, both with respect to the present political atmosphere as well as into the foreseeable future.

DATA

To conduct my state-level quantitative analyses, I employ 2007 data from the SurveyUSA polling firm (with monthly survey wave data from February-May 2007 clustered by state), the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2009), and the Pew Forum's (2009) U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. Specifically, I consider the following key dependent variables: support for same-sex marriage and opposition to same-sex marriage. To conduct analyses of the factors that influence same-sex marriage perceptions, I employ the following key independent variables: age, race/ethnicity, education, gender, religiously adherence, southern region, ideology, and party identification affect public perceptions of same-sex marriage. I expect that Blacks, Latinos, male gender, religious adherence, age, and southern culture have a negative impact on gay rights perceptions, making it more likely that gay rights policies will move in a more conservative direction. On the other hand, I expect that education, a liberal ideology, and identification with the Democratic Party will have a positive impact on gay rights perceptions, thereby moving state-level preferences in a more liberal direction.

DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Same-Sex Marriage (Support and Opposition)

For my dependent variables, I apply two measures from the 2007 SurveyUSA dataset: (1) percentage support for same-sex marriage and (2) percentage opposition to same-sex marriage (see Appendix 1 for more details on the methodology). Employing these two dependent variable measures is important since support for same-sex marriage represents a particularly high threshold of support while opposition to same-sex marriage may apply to individuals who strongly oppose gay rights in general, as well as to those who may not meet the high threshold of

support but may nevertheless be supportive of other gay rights measures, such as support for civil unions. These categorical variables are not weighted. The value ranges for support of same-sex marriage varied from 53 percent in Massachusetts to 14 percent in Alabama.

INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Age (Youth)

The independent variable measure for youth is taken from the 2007 SurveyUSA dataset. Here, youth is measured as the percentage of individuals between the ages of 18-34. In the survey, respondents were asked their age and then collapsed into the following categories; 18-34, 35-54, and 55+. No effort is made by Survey USA to limit respondents to registered voters or likely voters. This ordinal demographic variable is weighed according to the most current U.S. Census estimates at the time in order to more accurately represent the population of a given state. The values in the states surveyed range from a high of 36 percent in Texas to a low of 30 percent in Wisconsin, Ohio, Iowa, Oregon, Alabama, Minnesota, and Kansas.

Race/Ethnicity (Black and Latinos)

The independent variable measures for blacks and Latinos are also taken from the SurveyUSA dataset. Respondents to the survey were asked their race and were collapsed into the following categories: White, Black, Hispanic, and “other.”³ As with youth, this categorical variable is weighted according to the most current U.S. Census estimates taken at the time. The values for blacks in the states surveyed range from a high of 24 percent in Alabama to a low of one percent in Oregon while the values for Latinos range from a high of 39 percent in New Mexico to a low of one percent in Kentucky.

Education

The independent variable measure for education is from an American Community Survey conducted in 2007 (US Census Bureau 2009). This ordinal variable is unweighted. Respondents

³ For certain states where populations of Asians are significant, SurveyUSA combines the other category with Asian.

were asked their highest level of education attained.⁴ For this analysis, only the percentage of those with a Bachelor's Degree or more is utilized. The value ranges for education vary from 38 percent in Massachusetts to 20 percent in Kentucky.

Gender

The independent variable measure for gender is taken from the SurveyUSA dataset. As with several of the other demographic variables, the categorical variable for gender was weighted according to recent U.S. Census estimates available at the time. The variance for this variable in terms of the male gender ranges from 47 percent to 49 percent across several states.

Religious Adherence

The independent variable measure for religious adherence comes from the Pew Forum's (2009) U.S. Religious Landscape Survey of over 35,000 adults conducted in the summer of 2007. Respondents were asked to state how often they attended religious services: more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never. The categories were collapsed into at least once a week, once or twice a year/a few times a year, seldom or never, and don't know/refused. For the purposes of this analysis, only the percentage for the first measure will be utilized. As such, the values ranges for religious adherence varied from 52 percent in Alabama to 30 percent in Massachusetts.

Southern Region

The variable measure for southern region is a simple binary designation that falls in accordance with the U.S. Census designation.

Ideology

The independent variable measures for ideology are taken from SurveyUSA's dataset as well. These categorical variables are not weighted. Respondents are asked to choose between

⁴ Data on educational attainment have been derived from a single question that asks, "What is the highest grade of school . . . has completed, or the highest degree . . . has received?"

being identifying as a conservative, moderate, or liberal. I apply percentage measures for liberal in my first set of models measuring support for same-sex marriage and the percentage measures for conservative for my second set of models measuring opposition to same-sex marriage. The value ranges for ideology vary for liberals from a high of 25 percent in Massachusetts to 12 percent in Alabama, and for conservatives from a high of 35 percent in Texas to a low of 17 percent in Massachusetts.

Partisanship

Last, the independent variable measures for partisanship are likewise taken from the SurveyUSA dataset. Respondents were asked to choose between identifying as a Republican, Democrat, or Independent. These categorical variables are not weighted. I employ the percentage measures for Democrat for my models measuring support for same-sex marriage and the percentage measures for Republican for my models measuring opposition to same-sex marriage. The value ranges in the states surveyed vary for Democratic Party ID from 55 percent in Kentucky to 29 percent in Oregon, and vary for Republican Party ID from 44 percent in Kansas to 14 percent in Massachusetts.

Quantitative Analyses

My quantitative analyses examine the relationship between opinions of same-sex marriage and nine explanatory variables using polling data from 2007 for 16 states: Alabama, California, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maine, Minnesota, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. For my analyses, I employ OLS regression models with robust standard errors clustered by state. I do this in accordance with my previously outlined operationalization of the dependent variables, which constitute percentage survey response measures. The unit of analysis is the response of a randomly selected individual in one of the 16 mentioned states.

For sensitivity analyses, I test three models for each of my dependent variables (Models 1a-1c for “Support for Same-Sex Marriage” and Models 2a-2c for “Opposition to Same-Sex Marriage”). The first model incorporates all of the independent variables, including partisanship and ideology. The second model includes partisanship but not ideology and the third model includes ideology but not partisanship. Although I did not find any problems with multicollinearity for either of my main models, providing the results for these sensitivity analyses helps to demonstrate the consistency in findings across models and further attests to the validity and reliability of my approach.

RESULTS: DETERMINANTS OF SUPPORT FOR (AND OPPOSITION TO) SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

Overall, the findings shown in Tables 1 and 2 corroborate my theoretical expectations, with a few interesting exceptions (see Appendix 2). The pseudo R squared figures across all of the models are extremely high, over .93. This indicates that the independent variables that we have described can account for over 93 percent of the variation that explains support of same-sex marriage in the states, as well as over 94 percent of the variation that explains opposition to same-sex marriage across states. Taken together, the results paint a comprehensive picture of the dynamics that shape state-level public perceptions of same-sex marriage.

[Tables 1 and 2 about here; see Appendix 2]

Concerning the youth variable that captures the influence of age, my expectations were that the greater populations of youths in a state, the greater degree of support one would expect for same-sex marriage. The results show that this expectation was met with positive, significant findings for Models 1a-1c and negative, significant findings for Models 2a-2c, thus corroborating my first hypothesis (H1). In line with previous works, it thus appears there is indeed something unique about being young, at least for 2007, which relates to support for same-sex marriage. In five of the six models the variable for youth achieves significance at the .001 level in the expected direction. In the remaining model (Model 1b), the variable for youth achieves significance at the .05 level. This indicates that states with large populations of young people are significantly more likely to support same-sex marriage and are therefore more likely to legalize such unions.

Concerning blacks, my expectations were that the high populations of blacks in a state would lower the degree of support for same-sex marriage. The results show that this expectation was also met with negative, significant findings for Models 1a-1c and positive, significant findings for Models 2a-2c, thus corroborating my second hypothesis (H2). In four of the six models, this variable achieves significance at the .001 level and in the other two models (Models 2a and 2b) it achieves significance at the .05 level.

Interestingly, the results for Latinos are insignificant across all models. This indicates that as a whole, the aggregated Latino community lacks (or at least lacked in 2007 across the states examined) a clear preference for same-sex marriage. Such finding may be due in part to the fact that because the Latino population in the United States is not monolithic culturally and religiously as other American ethnic subgroups, one may need to disaggregate the measure into national origin subgroups to learn more about Latino preferences. Indeed, within the Latino umbrella lies an array of unique subgroups, which includes Mexicans, Cubans, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Hondurans, Guatemalans, and many others. While many of these groups are seen as leaning to the ideological left, others such as Cubans are known for their ideological conservatism. A more accurate picture of the effects of the various Latino cultures on same-sex

marriage may thus only be attainable through disaggregation (I further address this possibility in the future studies section below).

Concerning education, my expectations were that higher levels of education would translate into greater support for same-sex marriage. The results show that this expectation was met with positive, significant findings for Models 1a-1c and negative, significant findings for Models 2a-2c, thus confirming my fourth hypothesis (H4). In all of my models, education was significant at the .001 level. Such results suggest that higher education does indeed influence opinions of same-sex marriage in a liberal direction. Given the anecdotal evidence of higher education being slanted to the left on social issues, this finding is not surprising. However, since the level of education for individuals is voluntary, unlike the variables for age, race, and gender, there is a possibility that causation is in the reverse direction; in that individuals of a higher economic status and ascribing to post materialist values and therefore of a more favorable disposition to same-sex marriage could seek higher education more so than their cohorts in order to be in an environment more welcoming to their views (Ohlander et al. 2005, Abrahamson and Inglehart 1995).

With respect to gender, my expectations were that the greater the percentage male population in a state, the less support for same-sex marriage. The results show that this expectation was met with negative, significant findings for Models 1a-1c and positive, significant findings for Models 2a-2c, thus corroborating my fifth hypothesis (H5). This variable demonstrates various degrees of significance in all of the models, thus confirming the theoretical expectation that there is something intrinsic in male psychology which more likely opposes same-sex marriage compared to the female population. More specifically, the strongest significance is observed in Model 1a ($p < .001$) while the lowest level of significant is observed in Model 2a ($p < .1$).

For religious adherence, my expectations were that the greater populations of religious persons in a state the lesser degree of support for same-sex marriage. The results show that this expectation was met with negative, significant findings for Models 1a-1c and positive,

significant findings for Models 2a-2c, thus corroborating my sixth hypothesis (H6). This variable is significant at the .001 level across both models and all sensitivity analyses. Such high level of significance confirms the findings in the literature that opposition to same-sex marriage among much of the religious elite and most religious texts translates into increased opposition among laymen, even after controlling for partisanship and ideology. As with the variable for education, there is a distinct possibility of reverse causation; that persons who oppose same-sex marriage may flock to religious organizations where their views are validated and framed in religious terms (Olson, Cadge and Harrison 2006).

Concerning Southern Region, my expectations were that if a state was located in the southern region, one would be less likely to observe support for same-sex marriage. These expectations find mixed results in the models. In Table 1, I find partial evidence in Model 1c that southern region decreases likelihood of support for same-sex marriage at the .05 level. In Table 2 I find strong evidence across models that a southern location increases the likelihood of opposition to same-sex marriage ($p < .05$ for Models 2a and 2b; $p < .001$ for Model 2c). These results corroborate my seventh hypothesis (H7).

Last, concerning ideology and partisanship, my expectations were that the greater populations of liberal ideologues and Democratic partisans in a state, the greater degree of support for same-sex marriage. Along the same lines, I expected the opposite for conservative ideologues and Republican partisans. Concerning these expectations, the models have mixed results. With respect to ideology, I find that the liberal variable is positive and significant in Models 1a and 1b ($p < .05$), which corroborates H8a, while the conservative variable for Models 2a and 2b is insignificant. Meanwhile, with respect to my measures for partisanship, I find partial support (in line with H9a) that identification as a Democrat increases one's likelihood to support same-sex marriage (Model 1a in Table 1; $p < .1$). Finally, as shown in Table 2, I find consistent support that identification as a Republican decreases one's likelihood to support same-sex marriage (Model 2a = $p < .05$; Model 2c = $p < .1$), thereby corroborating my final hypothesis (H9b).

In observing these results, it is important to note that although ideology and partisanship are uniquely different concepts the manner in which individuals perceive these concepts often involve considerable overlap. This is largely why I have employed sensitivity analyses. Accordingly, as stated previously, I have incorporated three models for Table 1 and Table 2, which employ Ideology and Partisanship jointly in model 1a and 2a and separately in 1b, 2b, 1c and 2c. Employing these sensitivity analyses attests to the validity and reliability of the findings across the models. Accordingly, the overall consistency of the findings observed across the models for each key explanatory variable provides a measure of increased confidence in the results.

Case Studies

Thus far I have employed quantitative methods to examine the relationship between key factors (i.e., independent variables) that influence public perceptions of same-sex marriage, most of which I derived from the literature. I now shift to a qualitative approach to assess three “best test” cases: Minnesota, Vermont, and Alabama. I utilize this secondary approach for several reasons. First, I use the best test case method to provide a more dynamic approach to time rather than a static one as used in the quantitative approach and in most of the literature. Indeed, focusing on the year 2007 in my analysis (based on available data sources) has provided only a snapshot in time of the relationship between the factors. Second, employing a qualitative approach provides a more in-depth assessment of the key relationships and helps put the issue of same-sex marriage more broadly into historical context. Third, looking at these states and these key factors from a qualitative perspective, I am able to provide more nuanced strategic inferences that may be applicable to practitioners for future mobilization efforts and electoral battles. Such strategic inferences may enable political activists (and other practitioners) to more effectively and efficiently allocate their resources and thus maximize their impact.

The case of Minnesota is meant to be a descriptive analysis of a best test case that falls in the middle of the liberal-conservative spectrum. I then examine Vermont as a best test case for

the liberal end of the spectrum and follow with an examination of Alabama as a best test case representing the conservative end of the spectrum. In addition to the factors included in my quantitative models, I also examine other additional contextual factors previously alluded to in the literature.

MINNESOTA

Minnesota has a special place in the history of gay rights in the United States as it was the scene of the first lawsuit, *Nelson v. Baker*, which challenged the constitutionality of laws limiting marriage to one man and one woman. Here, I examine the case of Minnesota in order determine how the previously identified key factors have applied for this state that appears to be at “ground zero” for the fight over same-sex marriage (and gay rights more broadly). In doing so, I also examine other factors not included in the quantitative model that seem relevant, explore the 2012 narrow defeat of Minnesota’s traditional marriage amendment, and conclude this section with a discussion on the future of gay rights in Minnesota.

The African American population in Minnesota represents the largest minority group, but is still low by national standards. Blacks made up 3% of the electorate in my 2007 SurveyUSA dataset and more recently make up about 4.57% of the state according to the 2010 Census. Even though the factor for Blacks was significant in the model, given the small number of blacks in Minnesota this factor is not expected to be as influential on aggregate state opinion concerning same-sex marriage and by extension gay rights policies.

Education is one factor for which Minnesota has a small but significant difference with the national average. According to 1990 U.S. Census data, nearly 22% of Minnesotans reported having a college degree, compared to 20% of individuals nationwide who made the same claim (U.S. Census Bureau 2009).⁵ By 2009, the number of Minnesotans with a college degree had increased to 31.5%, compared to the nationwide total of 28%. This means that in 1990,

⁵ In order to account for a more dynamic aspect of time rather than static, I switch focus in the qualitative analysis from using 2007 survey data where the respondents were the general public, to using 2012 survey data where the respondents were voters.

Minnesota was two percent more educated than the nation as a whole, and by 2009 Minnesota was outpacing the rest of the nation by three and a half percent. Thus, Minnesota's lead in education over the rest of the nation is small but significant and is growing over time. Since this factor is tied to higher degrees of support for same-sex marriage, it is expected that Minnesota's higher than average education level would have some influence on aggregate state opinion on same-sex marriage in a more liberal direction, and if trends of the last 20 years hold, that influence is expected to grow in the future.

Concerning the factor for age, Minnesota is very close to the national average. According to the aforementioned exit poll, 20% of Minnesotans reported being under 30 years of age, compared to 19% nationwide. However, young voters constituted a critical voting bloc in the narrow defeat of Amendment 1 in 2012, with 68% of voters 18-29 years of age opposing the amendment. Since 2012 was a Presidential Election year, turnout among youths was higher than in other years. If turnout in Minnesota had been more like it was in other demographically similar states for midterm election years such as 2010, it is possible that Minnesota's traditional marriage amendment would have likely passed.⁶

When it comes to religion, Minnesotans report being slightly less religiously adherent than the nation as a whole, with 38% report attending religious services at least once a week compared to the national average of 39%.⁷ To put this in perspective, in Massachusetts, the first state to fully embrace same-sex marriage was reported to have only 30% attending services at least once a week. As with the other factors, this average level of religious adherence compared to nation as a whole likely has very little effect on statewide opinion of same-sex marriage.

In terms of location of the electorate, 24% of voters in 2012 reported living in urban areas, 43% reported living in suburban areas, and 33% reported living in rural areas. While

⁶ This is based on analysis performed by the author using turnout in Iowa in 2010, table available upon request.

⁷ Due to the unavailability of data, comparing the religious data for these states in 2007 to another year will not be attempted. The only data on this topic by state was collected from 2004-2009 by Gallup and the Pew Forum and variance in this short time frame was minimal.

residents in rural and suburban areas tend to have more conservative views of social issues such as same-sex marriage, this variable was not covered extensively in the literature or my analysis. Therefore it is difficult to know the effect of this variable while holding the other variables constant, though past research has generally shown that rural voters tend to be relatively more conservative than those living in urban areas. Nevertheless, future studies should explore the potential impact this variable may have at the state level, both in terms of measuring public perception as well as differences in policy making across rural versus urban communities from one state to the next.

When other factors not included in the quantitative model are examined, the picture of Minnesota being evenly split on same-sex marriage becomes more complete. Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton, elected in 2010, is strongly in favor of same-sex marriage. He campaigned on the issue and has been a promoter of the issue while in office. The Republican wave election in 2010 crested strongly in the down ballot Minnesota legislative races with the Republicans recapturing the State House of Representatives as well as capturing the State Senate for the first time in history. In 2011, nearly all Republicans and a few Democrats in the legislature passed a state constitutional amendment defining marriage as between one man and one woman, sending the measure to the voters for approval in time for the 2012 elections. Unfortunately for same-sex marriage advocates at the time, the structure of the Minnesota state constitution does not require gubernatorial consent of constitutional amendments passed by the legislature.

Minnesota's effort to amend its state constitution was a hard fought battle on both sides of the issue. To campaign against the "Amendment 1" measure, the liberal group Minnesota United for All Families spent close to \$12 million, more than doubling the \$6 million spent by the Minnesota for Marriage conservative group campaigning in favor of the measure (Ringham and Aslanian 2019). The state's two biggest newspapers, the *Pioneer Press* and *Star Tribune*, came down on opposite sides of the fence, with the *Star Tribune* against the amendment and the *Pioneer Press* in favor of it. Former Minnesota Vikings offensive lineman Matt Birk spoke in

favor of the measure while his former Vikings teammate Chris Kluwe campaigned against it. Even well-known Minnesotan media personalities opposed each other over the measure, with radio host Garrison Keillor and television anchor Don Shelby campaigning against the ban while television anchor Kelly Ylenta favored it (WCCO 2012; Kimball 2012). In addition to its financial advantage, the Minnesota United for All Families campaign boasted a robust grassroots push and church outreach effort that dwarfed the competition (Sturdevant 2013). Due perhaps partially to increased Democratic turnout for the Presidential Election, the amendment was ultimately defeated 53-47%.

Despite the defeat of Amendment 1, it still remained that Minnesota had banned same-sex marriage by statute in 2011. The effort to change that law is currently underway in the state legislature, where new Democratic majorities (elected in 2012) in the State House of Representatives and State Senate are debating legislation to accomplish just that.

Another contextual factor not included in the analysis is the strength of the LGBT community in Minnesota. Although large numbers of member of the LGBT community reside in certain neighborhoods in Minneapolis, they are less visible in other parts of the state. According to a 2012 Gallup survey, 2.9 percent of Minnesotans identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender, which is lower than the national average of 3.5 percent.

Supporters of same-sex marriage are also unlikely to find success through judicial means as they have in several other states. Because the Democrats were unable to capture the governor's office for 20 years before the 2010 elections, and state supreme court justices have a mandatory retirement age of 70, six of the seven members of the state supreme court have subsequently been appointed by Republican governors. The seventh was appointed by current Democratic Governor Mark Dayton.

In conclusion, the key factors assessed for Minnesota are split with respect to predicting more or less gay rights in state in the foreseeable future. Other contextual and institutional factors not included in the quantitative model such as the State Supreme Court, legislature, governor, and the defeat of Amendment 1 indicate a slight lean in the liberal direction, which

reflects recent events. It is not hard to see why Minnesota appears to be “ground zero” in the contemporary fight over gay rights. More generally, Minnesota appears to be evenly divided in regards to same-sex marriage, and therefore any use of financial resources by interest groups on either side of the political aisle would be a wise investment.

VERMONT

The state of Vermont is unique in the history of gay rights in the United States because it became the first state to confer rights equivalent to marriage to homosexual couples in 2000. This came after the state Supreme Court decision in the case *Baker v. Vermont* in 1999. This case required the legislature to enact some form of civil union arrangement with equivalent rights but did not require the acknowledgement of same-sex marriage. In 2009, the Democratic-led legislature passed same-sex marriage legislation, but it was swiftly vetoed by the state’s Republican Governor, Jim Douglas. Shortly thereafter, his veto was overridden, and same-sex marriage was legalized on September 1, 2009 (Gram 2009). Vermont thus became the first state in the union to legalize same-sex marriage by a vote of the legislature rather than by judicial decree.

Vermont is one of the least ethnically diverse states in the union. In the 2012 exit polls, only one percent of voters identified themselves as African-American. Looking to the near future, this small population of black voters is expected to have a minimal effect on the statewide opinion of same-sex marriage.

Education is a factor for which Vermont has a small but significantly higher level than the national average. For 1990, U.S. Census data shows that 24% of Vermonters reported having a college degree, compared to 20% of individuals nationwide who made the same claim. By 2009, the number of Vermonters with a college degree had climbed to over 33%, compared to the nationwide total of 28%. This means that, in 1990, Vermont’s lead over the nation as a whole was 4 points and by 2009 the lead had grown to 5 points. Thus, Vermont’s level of education compared to the rest of the nation appears to be growing with time. As a significant

positive predictor for statewide opinion of same-sex marriage, it can be assumed that the Vermont's high and growing level of education makes the state opinion significantly more favorable towards approval of same-sex marriage.

Concerning age, only 13% of voters were under the age of 30, compared to the nation as whole for which 19% of voters were under the age of 30. This suggests Vermont has an older than average population and if one were to employ this factor alone to predict attitudes of same-sex marriage, one might assume conservatism would prevail. However, taken in the context of the other key factors suggesting a more liberal slant, the effects of age are likely overwhelmed.

The factor regarding religious adherence is perhaps the strongest indicator of the prospects for current and future state opinion on same-sex marriage. Vermont, along with New Hampshire, is the least religiously adherent state in the union, with only 23% of residents reportedly attending religious services at least once a week. This is far below the national average of 39%. This means that there are significantly fewer Vermonters that are being influenced by clerical opinion leaders who have been, at least historically, more often opposed to same-sex marriage. This bodes ill for any attempts to reverse Vermont's liberal opinions on same-sex marriage and to amend state law to restore traditional marriage.

Being a largely rural state, no Vermont voters in 2012 reported living in urban areas, 42% reported living in suburban areas and 33% reported living in rural areas. As mentioned in the previous section, however, it is difficult to know the effect of this variable while holding the other variables constant, as this variable is not covered extensively in the literature nor my models. Generally speaking, although rural voters tend to be more conservative, Vermont is a very liberal state such one might expect this factor may not have as strong an influence as it may elsewhere (especially in the South).

A number of institutional factors also point to a more liberal tendency towards same-sex marriage. Hypothetically, if a grassroots movement among Vermont's population wanted to amend the state constitution to define marriage as between one man and one woman (as Californians did in 2008), the process for amending the constitution would make such a prospect

extremely difficult. Such an amendment would have to originate in State Senate and receive a two-thirds vote there as well as a majority vote in the House of Representatives. Then it would need to be passed again in the same manner in the subsequent session of the legislature. The measure would then need to be passed by the majority of voters in the state. Furthermore, only state legislatures elected in mid-term elections may originate a constitutional amendment (Constitution of the State of Vermont 1793). Currently, those prospects are dim as the Democratic Party has a two-thirds majority in the Senate and a 54 seat majority in the House of Representatives. If previous votes are taken as a benchmark, it would be expected that the majority of Democratic legislators would be in favor of same-sex marriage. Recently, the state's Democratic Governor Peter Shumlin campaigned on a pro same-sex marriage platform and seems to have no intention of governing otherwise.

Vermont also has a very high percentage of people who consider themselves LGBT. Although Hawaii has the highest share of people who consider themselves as such, Vermont comes in at a close second with 4.9 percent. This is far above the national average of 3.5 percent. This higher than average share of the state population that considers themselves part of the LGBT community and has an economic interest in same-sex marriage likely translates into a notable level of political clout in the state government.

Taken together, nearly every significant factor from the quantitative model as well as the other institutional and contextual factors points to the same conclusion; same-sex marriage is likely well entrenched in Vermont. It would be advantageous for interest groups with limited means on both sides of the spectrum to ignore Vermont in future fights over gay rights. Any resources devoted by either side by such groups to change the states policy on same-sex marriage or maintain the status quo would likely be ill spent. However, if a well-funded liberal group wanted to push the LGBT agenda beyond same-sex marriage, Vermont could be a good place to do so. Even well-funded conservative groups may be well advised to avoid trying to change the tides of this state.

ALABAMA

Alabama's electorate is much more conservative than the rest of the country on a host of issues, and same-sex marriage is no different. This is likely due to several factors, chief among them Alabama's extremely high level of religious adherence among its population. In 2006, voters in Alabama amended their state constitution to ban same-sex marriage by an 82-19% margin, a feat only topped by Mississippi and Tennessee (Trojan 2013).

Alabama is also one of the states that has the highest percentages of African Americans in the union. Over 28 percent of Alabama's voters identified themselves as black in the 2012 election exit polls, compared with only 13% who do so nationwide. Given that the black population of Alabama is so large—more than twice the national percentage—it is expected that given past trends in voting on gay rights issues, such high concentration of black individuals would influence statewide opinion and, by extension, statewide policy in a conservative direction.

The level of education in Alabama is significantly lower than the national average. In 1990, only 15.7% of Alabamians reported having a college degree, compared to over 20% of individuals nationwide (U.S. Census Bureau 2009). By 2009, 22% of Alabamians reported as much, compared to 28% nationwide. This means that between 1990 and 2009, the education gap between Alabama and the rest of the nation grew from 4.6 points to 5.9 points. Given the results of the quantitative model, one may expect the large and growing education gap to influence statewide opinion of same-sex marriage in a more conservative direction. Interestingly, however, using the 2012 exit polls of those who actually voted, I found that 44 percent of Alabamians reported having a college degree, which is slightly less than the 47 percent of people who did so nationwide. In line with previous literature on voting trends (see Campbell 1960; Tenn 2007; Burden 2009; Berinsky and Lenz 2011), it appears educated Alabamians tend to vote in higher proportions than the less educated, which indicates other factors besides education may be more influential at the polls.

Concerning the age factor, Alabama looks more like the nation as a whole. In the 2012 exit polls, 18% of Alabamans reported being less than 30 years of age, compared to 19% nationwide. Although age was found to be a significant factor in the models, Alabama's level of youths is not likely to be a deciding factor in influencing the aggregate statewide opinion on same-sex marriage in either direction.

Alabama's reputation for being an extremely religious state is confirmed in the data and has important implications for the state's future. Data from the 2007 Pew Survey shows that 52 percent of adults in Alabama attend religious services at least once a week, which is 13 percentage points higher than the national total. This indicates that there are significantly more people in Alabama being influenced by conservative religious opinion leaders than the nation as a whole. This level of heightened religious activity has no doubt had a profound effect on the attitudes of same-sex marriage of Alabama, particularly in a conservative direction. Looking forward, such trends are likely to keep Alabama strongly opposed to gay rights policies.

In terms of location of the electorate, 32% of Alabama voters in 2012 reported living in urban areas, 41% reported living in suburban areas, and 27% reported living in rural areas. While residents in rural and suburban areas tend to have more conservative views of social issues such as same-sex marriage, it is difficult to know the effect of this variable while holding the other variables constant, as this variable is not covered extensively in the literature nor my models. That said, since Alabama is a very conservative state, one might expect the rural voters are at least marginally more conservative overall compared to urbanites.

Currently (and not surprisingly), Alabama forbids same-sex marriage in its state constitution. After many years of banning such unions implicitly and by statute, it amended its state constitution in 2006 to prohibit same-sex marriage as well as civil unions. The campaign to pass the measure, known as Amendment 774, was relatively quiet compared to similar campaigns in other states. The measure passed easily with over 81 percent of the vote.

With consideration to the state's government institutions and legal framework, if same-sex marriage activists sought to change the law on the matter through amending the state

constitution, they would be facing a very difficult uphill battle. The Alabama state constitution requires a three-fifths positive vote in both the State House of Representatives and State Senate. The question must be then put to statewide referendum (Consitution of the State of Alabama 1867). Unlike some other states, the Alabama state constitution does not allow for citizens to initiate amendments for consideration to the state constitution. Up until recently, the state legislature was dominated by a coalition of conservative and liberal Democrats, but in the Republican wave election of 2010, Republicans gained control of both houses for the first time since reconstruction. Currently, Republicans hold a two thirds majority in the State Senate as well as a 29 seat majority in the State House of Representatives.

As well, Governor Robert Bentley provides no hope for liberal change on same-sex marriage either. Governor Bentley, a Republican, retains membership at the First Baptist Church of Tuscaloosa, where he is a both a Deacon and Sunday School Teacher. As one would suspect, Gov. Bentley publicly opposes same-sex marriage (Bosch 2011).

Same-sex marriage activists who might seek to change Alabama law on the matter would have a difficult time doing so through the state courts. In Alabama, Supreme Court justices are elected for six year terms, effectively making the position partisan and more reflective of statewide opinion. Currently, all nine justices are Republicans. The Chief Justice of the court is Roy Moore of national fame, whose previous term as Chief Justice was ended prematurely when he was removed from office because of his refusal to remove a display of the Ten Commandments in his court room.

Last, the LGBT community in Alabama is small by national standards. Only 2.8 percent of residents of Alabama consider themselves Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender, which is significantly lower than the national average of 3.5 percent. This lower than average percentage of people who consider themselves members of the LGBT community likely translates into diminished political power of the LGBT community in the state.

All the significant factors from the quantitative model as well as the other institutional and contextual factors indicate that the prospects for same-sex marriage in Alabama are remote,

at least for the foreseeable future. Resources devoted to Alabama by modestly funded interest groups on both sides of the fight over same-sex marriage would be better spent elsewhere. However, as with Vermont, if well-funded conservative groups wanted to push their agenda beyond the constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, Alabama would be the place to do so given its solidly conservative demographic and institutional factors. Even well-funded liberal groups likely would have very limited success in the state.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have incorporated in a quantitative and qualitative manner the relevant variables suggested in the literature and those of my own design to examine the determinants of same-sex marriage preferences at the state level. I have found that youth, education, a liberal ideology, and Democratic Party identification all influence state opinion of same-sex marriage in a liberal direction, whereas blacks, males, religious adherence, southern region, a conservative ideology, and Republican Party identification all influence state opinion of same-sex marriage in a conservative direction. I have also examined these variables, as well as other contextual and institutional factors, in a qualitative way by applying the best test case study method to Minnesota, Vermont, and Alabama.

In doing so, I have employed a state-level approach across numerous states rather than the aggregate nationwide or single state approach found so often in previous studies. My approach is useful because the debate over the definition of marriage has largely become a state-level issue, and unless the Supreme Court or Congress effectively “nationalizes” a resolution to the issue, it will remain at the state level for the foreseeable future. In addition to my state-level approach, employing mixed methods has been useful because it allowed for a more dynamic assessment of over time trends rather than a more static set of analyses. Such approach is also useful because it allows for an examination of other relevant factors which do not easily lend

themselves to quantitative analysis alone. Lastly, the mixed methods approach lends itself more easily to make strategic inferences for interested practitioners.

In the coming years, state battles over same-sex marriage will continue and may further intensify. Although current trends seem to suggest an overall liberalization of public opinion on the issue, such liberalization has not been uniform for all segments of society. Unless there is a nationalization of the issue, liberal leaning states in the Northeast, West Coast and parts of the Midwest will likely continue to legalize same-sex marriage while conservative leaning states in the Mountain West, South and parts of the Midwest will likely continue to shun same-sex marriage. Future maps of same-sex marriage in the United States are likely to resemble the standard red-blue division that the American public has become accustomed to in recent presidential elections.

LOOKING FORWARD: AVENUES FOR FUTURE STUDIES

Although the factors associated with the link between same-sex marriage and public opinion have been extensively explored in this thesis, there remain important avenues for future studies that may help build on and expand scholarly knowledge of this subject. One avenue for future studies is to collect more recent data with a more nuanced operationalization of key variables. A glaring example of how this could prove to be useful falls with respect to the Latino variable, which was not found to be significant in my models. This is likely in part because Latino opinion on same-sex marriage varies across subgroups, with Cubans being more conservative and other subgroups more liberal. As such, a more disaggregated analysis of Latino preferences would help identify the stance of different Latino subgroups and how they might affect gay rights policies across key states. That said, it is also important to note that, in recent years, Latinos at the aggregate level also appear to be in transition from a historically conservative to more liberal direction on gay rights, largely as a result of the efforts made by high profile Latino civil rights organizations and individuals. For example, shortly after President Obama officially endorsed same-sex marriage in 2012, the largest Latino civil rights

organization in the country, the National Council of La Raza, did the same with a unanimous voice. In doing so, they joined another large Latino civil rights organization, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (Ford 2012). Shortly thereafter, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R) of Florida also explicitly endorsed same-sex marriage, joining several other high profile Latino Democrats who have expressed similar opinions (e.g., Ros-Lehtinen was the first Republican woman elected to the House, as well as the first of Hispanic origin; see Grindley 2012). While these mentioned developments were not captured in my 2007 data analyses, it is likely that these high profile endorsements of same-sex marriage are a reflection of more recent views within the Latino community that have been in transit for many years. More recent data could better reflect such recent opinion changes.

Another avenue for future works is to expand the number of states included in the analyses. Due to data limitations, my analysis only examined 16 of the 50 states. While this was an adequate sample of the total universe of states and a new contribution to the literature, examining all 50 states would increase the sample size and therefore allow for a more representative and reliable analysis. Attaining more state level data will require researchers as well as pollsters to recognize the value of a state by state approach to studying same-sex marriage (and other key issues) where most of the policy changes come rather than an aggregate national-level approach.

Another avenue for future studies would be to explore how the relationship between the causal variables and same-sex marriage change when an option for civil rights is included in the survey instrument. While helpful to employ the two distinct dependent variable measures of support and opposition, these measures nevertheless have their own limitations. For example, heterosexual individuals could conceivably be against same-sex marriage in one's private affairs on principle, but be uncomfortable about extrapolating those views into the policy making arena. Meanwhile, politically conservative homosexuals could also conceivably face cross-pressure regarding their opposition to same-sex marriage, perhaps being in favor of same-sex marriage in their private lives, but be uncomfortable with efforts to force such statutes on the public at large.

Thus, when the choice for respondents is solely between the legal recognition of same-sex marriage or no recognition of same-sex marriage, an important alternative is lost. Civil unions have been enacted in many states where state legislatures and/or the public are interested in bestowing equal rights on homosexual couples but are for whatever reason uncomfortable with a total embrace of same-sex marriage, or otherwise limited because of a state constitutional amendment. The respondents who would choose civil unions if given the opportunity over the alternatives could conceivably fall in either the “support for” or “opposed to” camps previously employed in the SurveyUSA poll.

To elaborate, hypothetical respondent A, if given only the choice between supporting or opposing same-sex marriage, may answer that he/she is supportive of such unions. He/she would likely support civil unions as opposed to same-sex marriage if given the choice. Hypothetical respondent B, on the other hand, when given the choice is between same-sex marriage or no same-sex marriage may respond that he/she is against same-sex marriage for religious reasons but would be in favor of otherwise equal rights for homosexual couples and would be in favor of civil unions if given the option. As such, future studies would benefit from employing more varied and sophisticated measures to capture various levels of public for support and/or opposition to same-sex marriage and other gay rights related issues.

Besides adding an option for civil unions to the dependent variable, testing additional dependent variables may also yield important inferences. For instance, aside from measures of public opinion, it would be interesting to examine the effect that the key factors (some of which will differ than those outlined within this study) may have on the behavior of executive political actors, political entrepreneurs, legislators, as well as members of the judiciary.

For the independent variable for ideology, it may also be wise for future studies to break out of the standard liberal vs. conservative dichotomy. Including another option for libertarianism would allow for a more nuanced interpretation of how ideology impacts opinions on same-sex marriage. This is important because the libertarian ideology includes fiscal policy elements from conservatism and social policy elements from liberalism, and if given the choice

between identifying only as a conservative or liberal, a libertarian may be at a loss for which to choose. As well, as the percentage of the electorate that identifies as libertarians rises, particularly among younger cohorts, this is an increasingly important demographic to study.

For some states in the evolving struggle over same-sex marriage, institutions have at times failed to consider direct public considerations. One example of this is in Iowa in 2009 when the state Supreme Court ruled unanimously to allow same-sex marriage. As such, future studies that examine this type of situation and how they affect public opinion and policy outcomes would be especially useful as the United States Supreme Court is currently weighing two cases that have the potential to rule on the constitutionality of same-sex marriage and, by so doing, may circumvent the public out the decision making process.

Another possible avenue would be to better explore how and why higher levels of information, be it within a religious or higher education setting, so strongly influences opinions of same-sex marriage. While there are studies that examine this relationship to some extent (see Peterson and Donnerwerth 1998; Ohlander et al. 2005), none has extensively examined this relationship from an information-seeking or networking (i.e., “social capital”) perspective (see Putnam 1995). What I mean by this is that if one considers both factors to be tools for attaining information to build knowledge, it may be that higher education generally provides a more liberal-progressive knowledge base while religious adherence leads to more conservative information gathering and sharing. Since individuals involved with higher education and religion often engage with others in gathering, discussing, and disseminating information, one may consider how such networking translates into political activism as diverging forms of social capital. As well, individuals with networking connections to both higher education and religious groups may find themselves cross-pressured on issues such as same-sex marriage. For some, education may ultimately prevail in leading to a more liberal viewpoint while others may employ “hot cognitions” for which their emotions connected to the issue, along with their conservative-leaning social values, would trump other, more liberal-progressive information garnered vis-à-vis higher education (Lodge and Taber 2005).

It would also be helpful to understand how religious denominations influence opinions of same-sex marriage apart from merely frequency of attendance at religious services. While this topic has been addressed in the past (see Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006), the frequency at which religious institutions have changed their doctrine and practices in recent years (at times to adapt to and better reflect changes in public opinion) warrant a more in-depth and contemporary examination. A qualitative case study of these changes among denominations might also be helpful to understand how and why these changes are happening.

As it has been alluded to previously, opinion of same-sex marriage is more complex than simple support or opposition. Future studies that more directly measure the degree of intensity of such opinions would be valuable. Indeed, for some voters, same-sex marriage is a latent opinion that has little to no effect on their voting behavior; for others, same-sex marriage is an opinion so strongly held that it likely alters voting behavior, likely in the same vein as single issue second amendment or abortion rights voters. Thus, it would be advantageous to know the composition and behavior of such possible single issue same-sex marriage voters.

While I examined three states (Minnesota, Vermont, and Alabama) as best test cases, there needs to be more expansive qualitative analyses at the state level. The relationship between the causal variables identified in the literature and public opinion of same-sex marriage in the states assessed, as well as the broader gay rights policies in such states, can sometimes only be understood with the appropriate context and consideration of relevant institutional variables, which varies widely across all fifty states. It may also be useful to focus such qualitative studies at the local level as well.

Another possible avenue for future studies is to qualitatively examine the changing gay rights policies within private organizations as proxies for changing public opinion of same-sex marriage. While this relationship is not a perfect proxy, it may reveal interesting inferences. One example a possible case study is the recent developments within the Boy Scouts of America (BSA). Since its founding in 1910 by W.D. Boyce, the BSA made a name for itself in training American boys about traditional values, patriotism, and the outdoors. When the Church of Jesus

Christ of Latter-Saints officially sponsored it in 1913, the BSA began to ingrain itself within the culture of many churches that ultimately came to include the United Methodist Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Presbyterian Church, and others. Not only did the BSA find acceptance in many Christian denominations in the U.S., it also found widespread cultural acceptance, which may have been due to Norman Rockwell's paintings positively portraying the Boy Scouts and their leaders. Since then, the Judeo-Christian domination of the make-up of the membership of the BSA has often served to affirm its conservative origins and original tenants. According to the official Scout Oath, Boy Scouts since 1911 have promised to "do their duty to God" and to keep themselves "morally straight" (Boy Scout of America 1910).

The BSA's conservative mission and principles effectively disbarred atheist, agnostic, and openly homosexual leaders or youths from participating in the organization. This position was relatively uncontroversial for decades until the 1980s, after which a more public debate emerged and gradually spilled over into the judicial arena and eventually landed a Supreme Court case in 2000, *Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*. The issue at the heart of the case was the right of a private organization like the BSA to exclude certain groups of people from membership in accordance with its principles. By a 5-4 decision the Supreme Court ruled that the BSA did have the right maintain an exclusive membership.

The policy of exclusion of homosexuals resurfaced in 2012 when the BSA reaffirmed its ban after a two year review of the policy. In a surprise development, less than a year later the BSA announced that it was considering lifting the national ban on homosexuality, effectively leaving membership decisions up to each local Boy Scout organization. It appeared that this was an attempt to appease both sides of the debate. Under the proposed compromise policy, conservative religious organizations would have the freedom to continue to exclude homosexuals from the troops they have chartered, while secular, progressive, and liberal-leaning Christian groups could choose include homosexuals in the troops they have chartered. Such proposal by the BSA to leave this important decision up to local leaders seemed like a page out of the playbook of national political leaders on important issues such as same-sex marriage. Amid

outrage and public pressure from both sides of the debate, the BSA decided to postpone a decision until May 2013, at which point its annual meeting of local officials determined their new policy would be to restrict membership for troop leaders while allowing more open membership for the scouts regardless of sexual orientation.

Another major purpose of this study has been to yield important inferences for practitioners, of which I discuss in more detail below. Such inferences would be much more useful if future studies would examine the effect that gay rights interest groups have in lobbying both sides of the issue, particularly in attempting to shape policy vis-à-vis the executive and legislative branches, as well as with regards to practices adopted by private-sector organizations. Useful studies in the area could be both of a quantitative and/or qualitative orientation.

WALKING THE TALK: PRACTITIONER APPLICABILITY

Finally, it is important for one to be able to use the insights gained from both the quantitative models and the best test case studies to draw strategic inferences for both sides of the debate over same-sex marriage in the states. As I have mentioned before, this section presupposes that electoral battles over same-sex marriage in the future happen at the state level as they have in the past.

Conservative practitioners face an increasingly uphill climb in the electoral battles over same-sex marriage. With the youth of the country overwhelmingly in favor of same-sex marriage, the older generation of traditional marriage supporters dying, religious adherence declining in many states, and liberal groups outspending them two to one in the most recent election cycle, they must become more efficient with resources and more strategic to bounce back from discouraging defeats in 2012.

Conservative groups can start by abandoning states that have already been lost, and resist contesting states where same-sex marriage is not yet legal but where the factors that I have discussed are increasingly tipping the playing field against them. In order to get more bang for

their buck, they must concentrate their resources on states where the demographic and institutional factors tip (or at least may potentially tip) the field in their favor.

Conservative groups would also do well to tailor their messaging when campaigning to specific segments of the electorate, rather than employing a one size fits all approach. For conservatives, Republicans, the elderly, the religiously adherent, southerners, and the less educated, typical appeals to traditional values appear to work, because in the aggregate these groups oppose homosexuality and by extension same-sex marriage on a moral level. For liberals, Democrats, youth, the non-religious, and the educated, appeals to traditional values likely will not work, because at the aggregate level they do not hold such values. Retooling the message to appeal to higher-order reasoning, such as framing the debate as a civil rights issue, might work for these groups.

Conservative groups seem to likewise be losing key minority groups, such as Latinos, while Liberal groups are doing a better job of recruiting key opinion leaders within the Latino and African American communities. If conservatives are to be successful, they must strengthen their appeal to Latinos and blacks, and perhaps by first doing a better job of recruiting minority opinion leaders. Religiously-affiliated minority leaders could be low hanging fruit for this type of strategy. In addition to reaching out to groups that they are not currently doing well with, conservative groups would also be wise to strengthen their dominance among groups where they are currently doing well. Stretching ties to the Republican Party and conservative religious communities would be wise as liberal groups are increasingly attempting to make inroads with these groups.

Liberal practitioners now have a trio of victories in the 2012 election cycle after decades of conservative dominance on the issue. Now is the time to capitalize on the positive media attention that these victories and President Obama's endorsement has provided them. With the funds and much of the media on their side, they can press their cases in states where same-sex marriage is not yet legal, but where the factors are shifting in their favor. This will no doubt

happen in the near future. However, in order to expand their string of victories beyond traditionally liberal states, they must do several things differently.

First, liberal groups must expand a strategy adopted towards their 2012 election victories: refuse to cede religious groups to their conservative adversaries. That strategy seemed to work well in 2012. By recruiting more religious clergy to their side, and perhaps out-messaging other religious clergy more silent on the issue, they can potentially further increase their votes among the religiously adherent. Liberal groups should also magnify changing opinions within the black and Latino communities. They could do so by doing a better job of highlighting the endorsement of same-sex marriage by key opinion leaders that are popular in the minority communities, most notably President Obama now that he is fully, openly supportive of same-sex marriage.

Although liberal groups have begun to have electoral success in the some parts of the country, their reach continues to be limited in the South. Due to its high levels of religious adherence, Republican Party identification, conservative ideology and low education, the South has so far proved an extremely tough sell for same-sex marriage. Liberal groups must find a way to appeal to voters in these states. Along with appealing to religious leaders, they might also find success by recruiting high profile southern conservative Republicans to their cause to act as opinion leaders. They must also change their messaging beyond what they have employed in past elections to better appeal to those who hold conservative opinions of homosexuality and, by extension, same-sex marriage.

It would also be wise for liberal groups to use every tool at their disposal to break down the male aversion to homosexuality. Using well respected masculine figures, such as athletes, to endorse same-sex marriage, to come out of the closet, or to serve as spokesmen would likely aid this desired effect. There is evidence that liberal groups have already begun to use this tactic when NBA center Jason Collins recently came out of the closet and, by so doing, became the first active professional American athlete to publicly announce his homosexuality.

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Appendix 1: Survey USA Methodological Statement

This SurveyUSA poll was conducted by telephone in the voice of a professional announcer. Respondent households were selected at random, using Random Digit Dialed (RDD) sample provided by Survey Sampling, of Fairfield CT, unless otherwise indicated on the individual poll report. All respondents heard the questions asked identically. Within the report, you will find: the geography that was surveyed; the date(s) interviews were conducted and the news organization(s) that paid for the research. The number of respondents who answered each question and the margin of sampling error for each question are provided. Where necessary, responses were weighted according to age, gender, ethnic origin, geographical area and number of adults and number of voice telephone lines in the household, so that the sample would reflect the actual demographic proportions in the population, using most recent U.S. Census estimates. In theory, with the stated sample size, one can say with 95% certainty that the results would not vary by more than the stated margin of sampling error, in one direction or the other, had the entire universe of respondents been interviewed with complete accuracy. There are other possible sources of error in all surveys that may be more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. These include refusals to be interviewed, question wording and question order, weighting by demographic control data and the manner in which respondents are filtered (such as, determining who is a likely voter). It is difficult to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. Fieldwork for this survey was done by SurveyUSA of Clifton, NJ. For more details, see <http://www.surveyusa.com>.

Appendix 2: Quantitative Analyses Results

Table 1. Determinants of Support for Same-sex Marriage at the State-Level (OLS Regression Models with Robust Standard Errors, Clustered by State)

	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c
Youth (18-24)	.866*** (.205)	.761** (.375)	1.171*** (.175)
Black	-.332*** (.06)	-.314*** (.074)	-.363*** (.065)
Latino	.019 (.019)	.012 (.025)	-.004 (.025)
Education	.556*** (.069)	.614*** (.075)	.591*** (.077)
Gender (Male)	-1.594*** (.361)	-1.123** (.375)	-1.962*** (.414)
Religious Adherence	-.559*** (.05)	-.534*** (.044)	-.636*** (.048)
Southern Region	-1.748 (1.197)	-1.582 (1.368)	-2.603** (1.072)
Liberal	.359** (.136)	.359** (.143)	
Democrat	-.083* (.042)		-.083 (.052)
N	63	63	63
R ²	.9337	.9319	.9264

Dependent Variable: Support Same-Sex Marriage (%).

The data for most of the variables were taken from SurveyUSA state-by-state 2007 polling surveys for the following states: AL, CA, IA, KS, KY, MA, MN, MO, NM, NY, OH, OR, TX, VA, WA, WI (monthly survey wave data from February-May 2007 is clustered by state). In addition, the data for education and religious adherence were taken from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2009), and the Pew Forum's (2009) U.S. Religious Landscape Survey.

p < 0.1*, p < 0.05**, p < 0.001***

Table 2. Determinants of Opposition to Same-sex Marriage at the State-Level (OLS Regression Models with Robust Standard Errors, Clustered by State)

	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c
Youth (18-24)	-1.4*** (.249)	-1.534*** (.242)	-1.463*** (.219)
Black	.23** (.071)	.279** (.081)	.26*** (.063)
Latino	.001 (.028)	.032 (.028)	.007 (.026)
Education	-.501*** (.099)	-.54*** (.102)	-.564*** (.058)
Gender (Male)	1.15* (.599)	1.649** (.555)	1.415** (.53)
Religious Adherence	.413*** (.094)	.524*** (.059)	.472*** (.082)
Southern Region	4.942** (1.417)	4.484** (1.434)	5.436*** (1.042)
Conservative	.169 (.206)	.163 (.209)	
Republican	.158** (.074)		.155* (.074)
N	63	63	63
R ²	.9419	.9387	.9405

Dependent Variable: Oppose Same-Sex Marriage (%).

The data for most of the variables were taken from SurveyUSA state-by-state 2007 polling surveys for the following states: AL, CA, IA, KS, KY, MA, MN, MO, NM, NY, OH, OR, TX, VA, WA, WI (monthly survey wave data from February-May 2007 is clustered by state). In addition, the data for education and religious adherence were taken from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau 2009), and the Pew Forum's (2009) U.S. Religious Landscape Survey.

p < 0.1*, p < 0.05**, p < 0.001***

Vita

Born in the Nuevo Casas Grandes Mexico area, Daniel Call moved to the United States with his family as a child. Growing up in rural Minnesota, Daniel was naturally drawn to politics. One of his earliest memories was convincing his friends in his first grade class why they should vote for George H.W. Bush in the 1992 presidential election. Also interested in non-profit work, after graduating from high school in 2004, he embarked on a two-year non-profit mission in Alabama and Florida.

After his first semester of college at Brigham Young University Idaho, Daniel decided to embrace his passion for politics and changed his major from Economics to Political Science. With a fondness for the practitioner side of political science, Daniel was elected three terms as chairman of the College Republicans, and was a member of the Phi Sigma Alpha Honor Society. Daniel enjoyed raising money and recruiting students for the Republican Party, as well as deploying the organization for several large-scale get out the vote efforts. Upon graduation with his B.A. in 2010, Daniel continued his interests when he served on a long-shot congressional campaign as a Deputy Finance Director for Chip Cravaack where he was in charge of raising money. When the campaign turned out to be successful, Daniel decided to continue his education by enrolling in the University of Texas at El Paso in the Political Science M.A. program where he also served as a teaching assistant. With a strong interest in American institutions, behavior and public opinion, Daniel was subsequently offered a position to serve on Mitt Romney's presidential campaign in 2012.

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This thesis was typed by Daniel E. Call.