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Exploring Connections Between Efforts to Restrict Same-Sex Marriage and Surging Public Opinion Support for Same-Sex Marriage Rights: Could Efforts to Restrict Gay Rights Help to Explain Increases in Public Opinion Support for Same-Sex Marriage?

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by

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Abstract

Scholarly research on the subject of the swift pace of change in support for same-sex marriage has evolved significantly over the last ten years. The shift has gone beyond the scholarship's initial description amongst demographic groups on how opinion has changed on gay rights issues, like same-sex marriage, to an examination of why the change has occurred. A great deal of the initial research on the topic seemed to focus on demographic traits that suggested a greater propensity toward support for same-sex marriage as time went on. Is the existent literature sufficient to explain why such a dramatic change in public opinion has occurred in the United States? My goal in this paper is to explore the plausibility that electoral events and the public dialogue/debate that surround them have accelerated the impact described in the four predominant theories, *cohort succession, contact theory, intracohort theory,* and *media exposure.*

This paper includes three separate hypotheses to explore the possible connections between efforts to restrict gay rights at the ballot box and the ever-increasing support for same-sex marriage in public opinion polls. The results provide some preliminary indication that there are plausible connections between individual statewide efforts to restrict gay rights and increases in national public opinion support for same-sex marriage.

The first analysis examines electoral events concerning gay rights in states where these issues have faced voters most frequently; California, Maine, and Oregon. The first hypotheses posits a potential connection between exposure to gay rights at the ballot box and greater support for gay rights in subsequent elections concerning gay rights in the same state. No clear or consistent pattern of support emerges for successive electoral measures

concerning gay rights where voters have been previously exposed to gay rights question in an electoral context.

The second analysis explores national public opinion support for same-sex marriage as statewide ballot measures increase in popularity across the United States. The second hypotheses posits a connection between an increase in statewide electoral events concerning questions of same-sex marriage and an increase in national public opinion support for same-sex marriage with state-to-nation diffusion occurring and prodding upward national public opinion support for same-sex marriage simultaneously. The hypotheses is confirmed by data that suggests as election events on same-sex marriage increase across the United States at the state level, so too increases national public opinion support for same-sex marriage.

The third analysis explores the rate of change in support for legal same-sex marriage across the three states where gay rights referenda and ballot initiatives have been most frequent; it posits that in states where voters have greater familiarity with gay rights at the ballot because of previous exposure to them, their support will be greater over time than public opinion measured in other states that have similar political cultures but have not faced the same level of electoral activity on gay rights. The final hypothesis is inconclusive because of the fluid nature of the same-sex marriage debate in the universe of states within the United States. States are handling this salient issue in a number of ways; some legislatures now seem to be taking steps to legalize same-sex marriage statutorily; others may take no action to propel the provision of same-sex marriage equality or end constitutional bans on the practice; while another group of states are leaving activists to litigate the policy in Federal

courts or shift the debate toward statewide popular votes on the issue of authorizing same-sex marriage at the ballot box via ballot initiative or referendum.

Acknowledgments

For my forebears; the intrepid, tireless, and fearless champions of minority rights who made this study and reflection on the gay rights debate possible. For my parents David Dunlop and Betty Jones, who instilled in me a drive to challenge injustice and inequality everywhere. And unyielding gratitude for the patience, calm, and wisdom of my advisor, Dr. Kimberly M. Williams.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

There has been a torrent of news surrounding same-sex civil rights since 2008; public opinion has surged in support for same-sex rights to majority levels, the number of states recognizing same-sex relationships has more than doubled since 2008, the military has ended its "don't ask, don't tell" policy, and a sitting U.S. president personally endorsed the right for same-sex couples to legally marry. This paper strives to examine the quick rate of change in public support for same-sex marriage by examining why public opinion has changed, not simply how it has changed. More specifically, I posit the prospect that increased civic and political dialogue on the topic of same-sex marriage has driven up the support for same-sex marriage because of the topic's salience in pop culture, politics, and electoral politics. President Obama's formal endorsement of marriage equality may serve as an interesting allegory on this phenomenon that has taken place over the last few years, the notion that more and more people who have not supported gay and legal right to marry, have changed their minds. President Obama did so in an interview conducted in the Oval Office with interviewer Robin Roberts of ABC News, who came out of the closet late in 2013. In Roberts' interview with the President on May 9, 2012, he said:

> I have to tell you that over the course of several years as I have talked to friends and family and neighbors when I think about members of my own staff who are in incredibly committed monogamous relationships, same-sex relationships, who are raising kids together, when I think about those soldiers or airmen or Marines or

> sailors who are out there fighting on my behalf and yet feel constrained, even now that Don't Ask Don't Tell is gone, because they are not able to commit themselves in a marriage, at a certain point I've just concluded that for me personally it is important for me to go ahead and affirm that I think same sex couples should be able to get married. (Roberts, 2012)

President Obama's announcement marked an important shift in tone for the debate about the advancement of gay and lesbian rights in the United States. Even if his support, as some critics have suggested (Goodwin, 2012) was more politically and morally based than policy-centered, as the first President to formally adopt a pro-marriage equality stance, activists and supporters had a uniquely visible ally in their quest on behalf of same-sex couples. However, perhaps more telling than President Obama's "evolution" on the issue of whether or not same-sex partners should be entitled to a right to marry, was the way he articulated his support for them. Obama discussed his view in the context of the same-sex people he knows and works with. Obama also discussed how at, some point, his views had changed and evolved; like many other Americans, U.S. Senate candidate Obama did not support the right of same-sex couples to marry but, in 2004, he did support the notion of same-sex civil unions (Curry , 2012). President Obama's personal contact with homosexuals and his subsequent change of attitude toward same-sex marriage exemplify many of the phenomena at work that I will feature and describe in this analysis.

Scholarly research on the subject of the swift pace of change in support for same-sex marriage has evolved significantly over the last ten years. The shift has gone beyond the scholarship's initial description amongst demographic groups on how opinion has

changed on gay rights issues, like same-sex marriage, to an examination of why the change has occurred. A great deal of the initial research on the topic seemed to focus on demographic traits that suggested a greater propensity toward support for same-sex marriage as time went on (Bowman, K. & O'Keefe, B., 2004; Brewer, 2003; Lewis, G., 2005; Haeberle, 1999; Haider-Markel, 2000; Wilcox, C. & Norrander, B., 2002; Yang, A., 1997). More contemporary social science research focuses on why attitudes have changed so dramatically toward support for same-sex marriage with a predominant focus on generational attitude distinctions, contact with gays and lesbians, exposure to media, and intracohort change as alternative explanations at play that may help to explain the sudden shift in public opinion (Becker, 2012; Baunach, 2011; Brewer, 2003; Sherkat, Powell-Williams, Maddox, & de Vries, 2011; Sherkat, de Vries, & Creek, 2010; Schafer, C. & Shaw, G., 2009). President Obama's example, in this way, may be illustrative; what traits, both innate, and those acquired over time might have foretold his change of heart? What about the potential clues that his age, race, education, home, religious affiliation, or income might afford to such a prediction?

Scholarly literature and public opinion data give researchers on this topic a rich collection of statistics and demographic information that help to unlock the potential likelihood of not just those who are more prone to have changed their opposition to same-sex marriage, but those who may have been more prone to have held more supportive attitudes and opinions about gays and same-sex couples' rights from the beginning. Of course, the President of the United States is no ordinary survey respondent or citizen; his role and responsibilities require careful consideration of the ramifications of every public

position he takes. However, what seems missing from the discussion about how public opinion has changed on the topic of same-sex marriage is a focused reflection on *why* public opinion has changed and whether or not specific events have served as catalyst for this change. Some of the academic discussion of recent years has focused on the notion that generational replacement, sometimes called *cohort succession* – a topic I will explore in greater detail later- (Baunach 2012; Sherkat et. al, 2011; Treas, 2002), is responsible for the gradual change in support toward majority levels. In other words, as older more conservative people have passed on, they are replaced by younger more liberally oriented individuals more amenable to the provision of same-sex marriage rights. Similarly, other academic discussion has cleverly described the changes in attitudes, of individuals both within and across generational groups, as *intracohort change* (Baunach, 2010, 2012; Treas, 2002). Intracohort change describes the tendency to have changed an attitude toward a topic, like same-sex marriage rights within one generational group or across generational cohorts. Other academic and opinion discussion has centered on the power of personal relationships with gays and lesbians to cause an attitude shift amongst those who work, live near, or may be related to gays and lesbians (Becker & Scheufele, 2011; Brewer, 2008). This potential power of personal interaction and familiarity with gays and lesbians to change attitudes is referred to within the literature and opinion research as *contact theory*. The tendency for outgroups to be humanized- and over time accepted - because of individual experience in a work place, or school, or other personal contact is well documented in social science research in areas like race, religion, or other antagonistic social and demographic groups (Allport, 1954). Finally, other research has reached, somewhat unsuccessfully, to trace entertainment, news media exposure, and

high profile events as attention-seizing milestones that have captured the public attention and forced a collective dialogue on the topic of homosexuality and rights (Becker & Scheufele, 2009; Brewer, 2008; Sherkat et. al, 2008). In other words, as entertainment has portrayed more and more homosexuals and topics concerning homosexuality, some scholarly literature has contended that people have been forced to confront and subsequently re-evaluate their attitudes on the topic. Similarly, this line of academic work that focuses on the roles that media and elites cues play in mediating public opinion also contends that news events, like the beating and murder of Matthew Shepard, or the installation of an openly gay Episcopal bishop demonstrate that the debate about gays and lesbians and public policy supporting their interests and rights was no longer taboo or always politically toxic. What was once considered taboo, immoral, or distasteful as a general topic of discussion was emerging as a common topic featured on the evening national network news programs. Later, as I summarize the alternative explanations for the surge in public support for gay rights and same-sex marriage, I broadly refer to this line of academic inquiry as elite cues. These lines of inquiry are central to my discussion about the evolution of the same-sex marriage rights debate in the United States. Is the existent literature sufficient to explain why such a dramatic change in public opinion has occurred in the United States? My goal in this analysis is to determine the plausibility that electoral events and the public dialogue/debate that surround them have accelerated the impact described in the four predominant theories, *cohort succession*, *contact theory*, *intracohort theory*, and *media exposure*.

This phenomenon, specifically as it relates to the public debate and its role in influencing individuals within society, is known throughout social science as diffusion (Rogers, 2003). Initial research into the notion of diffusion examined how an idea might spread across social systems and geographic regions and gain salience with certain groups over time, with some small groups adopting early an idea or "innovation" early, slightly larger groups adopting later, and final groups lagging behind; its primary proponent was Everett Rogers who published "Diffusion of Innovations" in 1962 (Rogers, 1962). Diffusion helps to explain how an idea or innovation may expand across social networks and through social institutions (Soule & Strange, 1998). Additional research has found that states are prone to diffusion on policy matters, too; individual states may be more or less likely to adopt an idea, like restriction of same-sex marriage, dependent on the economic and political conditions of the individual state along with whatever the specific issue at hand proposes (Gray, 1973). Serious public debate in the news on the topic of same-sex marriage has emerged as early as the early 1990s with the Hawaii Supreme Court decision in *Baehr v. Lewin* (1993), which acknowledged the potential violation of 14th Amendment guarantees of equal protection when a group of same-sex couples petitioned the denial of their application for marriage licenses. Americans may have been forced to entertain varying narratives on the topic of same-sex relations, including everything from the legality of both sodomy and marriage since the early to mid 1990s. However, given the diffusion of media outlets and platforms for current events, it may now be easier to tune-out this information or to self-select those outlets that fit an individual's ideological bias. The gay rights discussion has proliferated from the state level to the federal level- but in its earliest forms, largely emerged in debate at

the municipal level in the form of opposition to adoption of anti-discrimination employment ordinances based on sexual orientation (Stone, 2012). Only in the late 1990s did state level initiatives begin to gain popularity at the ballot box and thus garner large scale public attention, potentially attributable to the passage of the Defense of Marriage Act (1996), and also perhaps due to the political potency of gay marriage as a socially divisive "wedge" issue.

Gay marriage came before voters at the state level 31 times in 30 states between 1998-2012 (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2013); only once out of the 31 times did voters reject defining marriage solely as a union between a man and a woman. I use the trajectory of this debate, particularly at the state level, to posit that there is a demonstrable link between the ongoing debate about same-sex marriage and increasing public support as demonstrated in recent public opinion polls and scholarly analysis. It is my contention that *intracohort change*, *cohort succession*, *media events*, and *contact theory* are highly intercorrelated and all play a role in the rapid surge in support for same-sex marriage. However, the predominant explanations for the quick rate-of-change I found in my research seem to lack a thorough examination of political and electoral events that have heightened the debate and attention paid toward the civic debate about same-sex marriage policy. If we conceptualize statewide events concerning same-sex marriage as the introduction of a new idea, whether it is an effort to restrict gay rights at the ballot box, court rulings, or policy debates, it seems plausible that state level events and legislation have prodded national opinion toward greater support for same-sex marriage. Indeed, none of the scholarly literature features an analysis of the potential

impact that these referenda and ballot initiatives themselves play in the formation or evolution of public opinion and public debate on same-sex marriage.

In his 2008 book *Value War*, Paul Brewer asserts that there is a relationship between public debate and public opinion- where each impacts the other as salient topics rise to the surface in public and political spheres. My goal in this project is to contribute another pillar to the ongoing discussion about how and why public opinion is changing rapidly on the topic of same-sex marriage rights- to explore whether or not significant public debate triggered by electoral events and contact theory accelerates the impact on the four theories I found most prominent in my literature review. Additionally, the aforementioned predominant explanations are multi-correlated and potentially could be subsumed under each other if configured differently (Baunach, 2011). However, these alternative explanations fail to account for the rapid change in support for same-sex marriage in relation to past and concurrent electoral activity on gay rights. The majority of the fiercely fought campaigns in the last ten years have emerged at the state level as voters have been confronted with the chance to preserve the status-quo, or constitutionally and statutorily restrict the definition of marriage between a man and a woman. Only in the last few years have voters in select states been asked to approve the provision of same-sex marriage rights at the ballot. The question remains: how have the campaigns themselves- as the media attention and public dialogue that emerged because of them – impacted mass public opinion on same-sex marriage?

Chapter 2: Research Question & Methodology

As of early 2013 the United States is now well beyond its second full decade where discussions about gay rights have occupied an ongoing and evolving discussion of public debate. Simultaneously, the panoply of public opinion polls released over the last few years have demonstrated an increase in public support for same-sex marriage. There are a variety of competing and interdependent alternate explanations for the quick rate of change in public support for gay rights, in particular same-sex marriage, as I will discuss in greater detail in my review of the academic literature. However, little attention has been given to the potential role that the public debate within state referenda and ballot initiatives on gay rights could have played on public opinion on issues like same-sex marriage. The greater historical focus, as revealed in my literature review, has been on the demographics that portend support for gay rights and same-sex marriage, along with the combination of alternative explanations like cohort succession, intracohort change, contact theory, and elite cues that I discuss in greater length later (Brewer, 2003; Becker & Scheufele, 2011; Brewer P.R. & Wilcox, C. 2005; Ellison, C.G. & Ramos-Wada, A.I.,

2011; Gaines, N. & Garand, J., 2010; Haider-Markel, D. & Joslyn, M.R. 2008; Olson, L.R., Cadge, W., & Harrison, J.T. 2006; Sherkat, D, Powell-Williams, M., Maddox, G. & de Vries, K. 2011*).* ***Is it possible that as the public has confronted these initiatives and referenda, that the debate surrounding each has diminished opposition to same-sex marriage in the aggregate? In other words, is it possible that efforts to restrict gay rights via ballot initiatives have over time caused an increase in public support for gay rights like same-sex marriage?*** Examples abound in recent political history of what has been called "the backlash hypothesis" where legal and political repercussions stem from a controversial legal or political action (Klarman, 2004; Ball, C.A. 2006). Might the strength of the gay rights movement in the United States owe itself to backlash politics propagated through diffusion at the state level? Some view the political ascent of Ronald Reagan and the Republican take-over of congress in 1994 as example of backlash politics in response to the liberal policies of 20th century presidents like Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson (Lind, 2012). Is it then possible that the backlash hypothesis applies to the 2003 Massachusetts *Goodridge* decision that legalized same-sex marriage there and was a catalyst for national and statewide electoral action on restricting gay rights? Moreover, does it seem possible that growing acceptance for gay rights and same-sex marriage were born from the ashes of the wildfire of referenda and constitutional bans that took place after 2003?

I explore these questions in the coming pages as I examine the dual evolution of public opinion on gay rights and the proliferation of statewide ballot initiatives and referenda on same-sex marriage. I will first trace some of the major themes present in

scholarly literature that have focused attention on the contour of public opinion and the debate over gay rights, most specifically same-sex marriage where such literature was available. I will examine the most prominent alternate explanations behind the quick change in support for same-sex marriage cited within this literature. As a backdrop to the other previous academic work that has been written on the topic, I also trace the structure of public opinion on the topic of same-sex marriage and how it has evolved, as well as the other prevalent patterns and trends within the literature. Ultimately, I seek to determine if sufficient evidence exists to support the notion that statewide ballot initiatives and referenda on the topic of same-sex marriage have acted as a lightning rod for public attention and increased support for these rights with the public over time, most specifically in states with action on gay rights in contrast to states who have not litigated questions of gay rights as frequently at the ballot box. Previous literature has suggested that state referenda and ballot initiatives may impact issues that the electorate uses to make candidate assessments on the same ballot (Donovan, Tolbert, and Smith 2008). Additional academic literature has posited that statewide institutions of direct democracy give voters potential heuristical cues about how they may make their choices for individual presidential candidates in the same election context (Nicholson, 2005). If vote priming exists via direct democracy within ballot initiatives and referenda in statewide elections during the context of presidential elections, it also seems plausible that the priming effects and issue salience may linger beyond the immediate context of a specific election.

Thus, I have conceptualized three separate ways to test the viability of the relationship between efforts to vote on gay and lesbian rights and their potential to increase public support over time. These hypotheses are based on a synthesis of the existent alternate explanations I found within scholarly literature on the topic; specifically, I leverage Paul Brewer's (2008) claim that there is a relationship between public debate and public opinion on gay rights, one where a combination of media coverage and current events interplay to impact public opinion and influence how Americans have thought about gay rights. I take Brewer's claim beyond his consideration of presidential speeches, sermons, tv series, and television news to expand public debate a degree further by including the civic debate surrounding gay ballot initiatives and referenda questions in several states as measured by public opinion.

> H1: In states where issues of gay rights have appeared at the ballot box most frequently, popular support for gay rights will show a general trend of increased electoral support for initiatives meant to preserve, provide, or stop the potential restriction of gay rights in the future, in each successive referenda over time and over the previous electoral event.

> H2: National public opinion poll data on support for same-sex marriage should increase over time as statewide ballot initiatives begin and increase in the United States; investigation of successive time periods with lesser and higher concentrations of electoral initiatives on gay civil rights will reveal sharp increases in support as forced democratic and political dialogue on the topic ensues over time.

> H3: The rate of change in support for legal same-sex marriage in the three states where gay rights referenda have been more frequent will be greater than in states where political culture is similar but has not seen the same level of referenda incidence on gay rights, including same-sex marriage.

Additional scholarly inquiry might examine whether or not the converse of the above hypotheses may also prove true, particularly for Hypothesis 1: if states have had no history of anti-gay referenda or ballot initiatives, might it suggest less support for gay rights overall as time evolves, or perhaps something unique and distinct about the state's political culture or institutions? More broadly, it seems plausible that were it not for the most significant legal events like *Baehr v. Lewin* (1993) and *Goodridge v. Massachusetts* (2003)- legal decisions that propelled the notion of same-sex marriage into the national dialogue - that the torrent of electoral and ballot initiatives would not have fostered the cross currents and changes to public support necessary to propel the gay rights movement as far as it has come in the past fifteen years. Despite same-sex marriage's relatively high salience in the present political climate, gay rights questions at the ballot box have grown from relative obscurity over the last thirty years; the range of statewide electoral initiatives and referenda concerning gay and lesbian rights, even outside the context of same-sex marriage, have spanned hundreds of elections at the municipal and state level. The political and public opinion landscape has changed significantly since the referenda and ballot initiatives on gay rights began in the late 1970s. However, I expect that the final two hypotheses will generate results in my data analysis that are more likely to confirm the relationship between the aggregate public dialogue created by these statewide initiatives and increase support as measured in public opinion polls nationally and statewide over time.

Chapter 3: Data & Measures

I use data from several sources to evaluate the potential impact of state referenda on public attitudes and opinions. The first source comes from the Secretaries of State offices for California, Maine, and Oregon. I utilize these states' electoral behavior as a potential indicator for changes in public support for gay rights after exposure to the public dialogue surrounding previous electoral campaigns geared toward gay rights. California, Maine, and Oregon are unique because they are some of the only states in the Union to have held multiple statewide elections on policy issues directly related to gay rights. In conjunction with my first hypothesis I use election results as a potential barometer to evaluate changes in public opinion, and thus public support, for matters concerning gay rights. I use statewide data in these cases because they are the best potential indicator for the residual exposure effect that public debate surrounding campaigns geared toward gay rights. Because there are, and have been, no national referenda on gay rights, states prove a potential, albeit crude, gauge for the type of change that may reveal the power of public debate geared toward gay rights to change attitudes and actions in an electoral context. Analyses of the evolution of public opinion and state-by-state polling data have been conducted, although for slightly different aim, using complex quantitative methodologies using *R* and programs like SPSS (see Gelman and Bafumi, 2004; Flores & Barclay, 2013). A detailed example of multilevel logistic regression models for the estimation of state level opinion data from national opinion data samples is offered by Park, Gelman, and Bafumi in 2004 that has become widely

referred to as “poststratification” (Bafumi, Gelman, and Park, 2004). The other more method, which has been more dominant in analyses of statewide opinion data has been called disaggregation. Lax and Phillips (2009) determined that multilevel regression and postratification (MRP) were more accurate than the previously and more dominant model for estimation developed by Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993) that pools large numbers of national surveys and then disaggregates the data so as to calculate opinion percentages by individual states. Lax and Phillips found in their research that MRP was more effective based on the analysis of 100 surveys on gay rights issues in conjunction with 1988 presidential election data (Lax & Phillips, 2009). Similarly, Flores and Barclay used nearly identical methodologies in their 2013 research to address the state of opinion in all fifty states of the Union and how each has changed since 2004 (Barclay & Flores, 2013).

While my analysis does not leverage the above techniques, I offer an initial exploration on the topic to discern the value of any future research in this area. To my knowledge, no specific attention has been paid toward the potential impact that electoral and ballot initiatives have played in the shaping of public opinion on support for gay rights, specifically same-sex marriage- or how efforts to restrict minority rights via ballot box may, over time, actually instigate an increase in public support for those same rights over time.

Table 1: Sources

Hypotheses	Data Previously Used	My Data	Source
H_1	n/a	Statewide electoral outcomes on initiatives regarding gay rights	Secrataries of State
H_2	n/a	National Opinion Poll Data	ABC News, Gallup, Pew Research, and WSJ/NBC Polls
H_3	n/a	Statewide Opinion Poll Data (CA, ME, OR, WA, WI, CO, CA, IA, NH, MI)	Statwide Polling Organizations (PPP, Public Policy Institute of California, SurveyUSA, etc.)

Each of the methods employed is geared to explore the larger possibility that efforts primarily geared toward restricting gay rights through referenda and ballot initiatives have, somewhat ironically, lead to increased public support as measured through public opinion polls. Each hypothesis explores the proposition that there is diffusion occurring between either electoral or other high profile events (like court cases, policy debates, etc.) in the states and thus impacting national public opinion; this diffusion is examined in states where questions of gay rights have occurred most frequently at the ballot box to determine if there is an initial connection between the incidence of their occurrence and successive electoral events within the same state. I then move to explore the prospect that the proliferation of gay rights electoral events within the states may impact national public opinion over time. I specifically explore the potential relationship between the number of electoral events that transpired amongst the states and whether there was an increase in public support for same-sex marriage in the

wake of this potential diffusion occurring from state level electoral action on gay rights, most frequently attempting to restrict them. Finally, I examine the actual statewide opinion data in states where questions of gay rights have occurred at the ballot box most frequently against a control group of states (Hypothesis III) where there is little, if any, record of statewide electoral action related to gay rights. The final hypothesis seeks to determine if there is a distinction in the contours of public opinion over the same period of time within culturally similar states who have or have not engaged in statewide policy debates at the ballot box over gay rights. If my data suggests that there is a distinction between increased public support within states that have engaged in greater civic dialogue about electoral activity centered around gay rights, further research into the potential connection between the accelerated pace of change in public support for same-sex marriage may help explain a phenomena that can instigate public support for policies geared toward civil rights but have been historically taboo.

Methods in Hypothesis I:

To glean whether or not there is a connection between advances in support for gay rights in states where electoral activity on those rights has been most pronounced, I examine ballot referenda and initiatives concerning gay rights and their outcomes to determine if successive support in electoral activity for gay rights has increased or maintained momentum. Ultimately, to understand whether or not there is a connection between efforts to restrict gay rights and increased support for them overall, individual

states' elections may serve as an effective barometer of this paper's central research question. If, indeed, support for gay rights increases, as measured by election outcomes, successive elections and their outcomes on the same topic may prove an early key indicator that that efforts to restrict gay rights actually propel support for those same rights among a broader swath of the electorate.

I reclassify separate ballot measures and referenda questions based on two broad categories: support for gay rights and opposition to gay rights. I trace the electoral outcomes for all of these referenda questions based only on the ballot performance of the initiatives in the support category.

California

In California's statewide ballot measure history there have been four specific propositions where gay rights have been at stake. These ballot propositions took place in 1978, 1986, 2000, and 2008. The 1978 Briggs Initiative, for example, attempted to ban gays and lesbians from employment in California's public educational system (Stone, 2012). In my reconfiguration of the data, votes for the Briggs Initiative are construed as opposition to gay rights, where as votes in opposition to the proposition are configured as support for gay rights. The second proposition included for California, Proposition 64, a categorization of AIDS throughout California as a "communicable disease" for civic purposes, which meant a virtual registry of those afflicted with the disease and possible quarantine as a result. Many in the gay community viewed this proposed measure as a mandatory outing of their disease and sexuality and feared the social implications of its

passage, according to an Opinion editorial written by David L. Kip, Professor of Public Policy at UC-Berkeley. (Kip, "LaRouche Turns To AIDS Politics.") I interpreted votes for the Proposition 64 as oppositional toward the provision of gay rights, while yes votes were construed as a preservation of the status quo and privacy rights- or as supportive of gay rights. The third proposition in California, Proposition 22, also known as the "Knight Initiative", was a statutory restriction of marriage as defined to mean those marriages between two persons of the opposite sex. (Secretary of State, California, 2013); I interpreted votes for the statutory restriction of marriage as oppositional to the provision of gay rights, while no votes were interpreted as supportive of gay rights. Finally, the fourth proposition was the 2008 Proposition 8, which constitutionally eliminated the right of same-sex couples to marry via referedum; yes votes were interpreted as oppositional to gay rights, where no votes were also interpreted as supportive of gay rights, even though rejection of the Proposition would not have resulted in the provision of same-sex marriage. This methodology holds throughout all of the ballot measures I use in the three states that have most frequently addressed gay rights at the ballot box.

Oregon

Like California, the state of Oregon has been no stranger to ballot measures concerning gay and lesbian rights, including same-sex marriage. While the electoral flurry of activity concerning gay and lesbian rights did not begin until ten years after California's first ballot measure, Oregon was enveloped by ongoing contentious local and statewide policy battles over gay rights, particularly notable was the resistance to anti-

discrimination ordinances that were adopted by municipal bodies in the late eighties and early nineties (Stone, 2012). Voters in Oregon confronted five separate statewide initiatives in the span between 1988 and 2004. The first came in 1988, Ballot Measure 8- which revoked a ban on discrimination put into place by then Governor Neil Goldschmidt (Secretary of State, Oregon). Ballot Measure 8 gave voters the opportunity to vote aye in an effort to repeal the ban put into place by Governor Goldschmidt. Voters choosing to vote no on Measure 8 have been configured as supportive of gay rights since their votes would have allowed the Governor's discrimination ban to remain in place.

In November of 1992 Oregon voters again faced a more broad statewide initiative, Measure 9 geared toward the discouragement of homosexuality by the state government and the prohibition of recognition of new protected classes of minority groups including those based on "sexual orientation" or "sexual preference", as read the state statute (Secretary of State, Oregon 2013). I have configured yes votes on Measure 9 as oppositional to gay rights since the measure intended to establish a standard via the Oregon Department of Higher Education and public schools that "recognizes homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism, and masochism as abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse…" (Secretary of State, Oregon). "No" votes on Measure 9 were configured as supportive of gay rights since they intended to prevent adoption of the statute discouraging homosexuality and other "behaviors."

Only two years after Ballot Measure 9 failed would another measure emerge specifically targeted toward the restriction of gay rights. In November of 1994, Oregon voters faced Ballot Measure 12 , a statute geared toward the prohibition of the same

prospective creation of classes of minority based on sexual preference, orientation, or recognition of same-sex partnerships designated as “domestic partnerships” (Secretary of State, Oregon, 2013). Ballot Measure 12 would have also decreed that no public funds be spent in the promotion or approval of homosexuality. I have configured yes votes as oppositional to gay rights since adoption of the statute would have eliminated the creation and establishment of protections based on sexual orientation or same-sex partnerships. I have interpreted no votes on Ballot Measure 12 as supportive of gay rights since rejection of the proposed statute would have preserved the status quo and the state’s ability to craft legal provisions and protections for homosexuals and same-sex partners.

Six years after the defeat of Ballot Measure 12 in Oregon, opponents of homosexual rights again were successful in placement of a ballot measure before voters intended to ensure that no state public schools, elementary or secondary, and community colleges were involved in the “instruction of behaviors relating to homosexuality or bisexuality shall not be presented in a public school in a manner which encourages, promotes, or sanctions such behaviors” (Secretary of State, Oregon). Furthermore, the statute went so far as to threaten the withdrawal of state financial funding from schools if such instruction took place in abrogation or derogation of the statute. I have interpreted yes votes on Measure 9 as oppositional to gay rights; I have also interpreted no votes on the same measure as supportive of gay rights since the discriminatory policy would thus be rejected if the majority of voters voted in the negative.

Finally, in November of 2004, Oregon voters faced the last statewide ballot initiative geared toward the constitutional restriction of marriage as between two

members of the opposite sex, "one man and one woman" (Secretary of State, Oregon). Oregon was one of eleven states in November of 2004 to adopt constitutional bans on same-sex marriage; . Voters who voted yes on Ballot Measure 36 authorized the adoption of the state constitutional amendment, whereas voters who voted no were rejecting the adoption of the constitutional amendment geared toward the definition of marriage as between one man and one woman. I have thus interpreted yes votes as oppositional to gay rights and no votes on Ballot Measure 36 as supportive of gay rights.

Oregon's electoral history on gay rights illustrates and potentially bridges an important relationship discussed in some of the scholarly literature about how the public views and thinks about gay rights in the sphere of equality versus the sphere of morality. Paul Brewer illustrates the emergent distinctions and cleavages in public between how the public has viewed issues like the ban on gays in the military, "Don't Ask Don't Tell", and anti discrimination employment policies than their views on issues like same-sex marriage. Brewer has contended that the public views these policies differently for largely moral and religious reasons (Brewer, 2008). Oregon's electoral record on gay rights seems to illustrate the distinctions in attitude towards these issues.

Maine

In contrast to the other two states surveyed thus far, Maine started voting on gay rights considerably later than both Oregon and California. Like Oregon, Maine has voted on matters of gay rights five times over a span of sixteen years. In many ways, the type of questions voters in Maine confronted on their ballots mirror the very same policy

questions faced by voters in Oregon. I have clustered the voter groups in these races again, as I have done in both California and Oregon, as voters who are supportive of gay rights, and those who are oppositional in their electoral habits to gay rights. These configurations are based on the policy goals of the ballot measure and on the electoral choices and goals voiced by voters when they chose to adopt or reject each ballot measure.

Maine voters faced the first ballot measure focused on gay rights in November of 1995. Question 1, while not explicitly about gay rights, asked voters whether or not to prohibit the expansion of protected minority classes beyond the protection already afforded to existent classes at the time. The measure posed the question: "Do you favor the changes in Maine law limiting protected classifications, in future state and local laws to race, color, sex, physical or mental disability, religion, age, national origin, familial status and marital status, and repealing existing laws?" The law would, if passed, limit the scope of protected classes by specifically enumerating them to the classes listed in Question 1, effectively ending the expansion of any new protected classes, particularly to homosexuals.

Because, like the other states already discussed, the potential expansion of these classes would have meant that gays and lesbians may have gained additional legal insulation from discrimination as a protected class, votes in favor, yes votes, have been interpreted as votes in opposition to gay rights. Whereas opposition to Question 1 meant that a prohibition on this type expansion would have stopped certain minority protection and privileges; I have construed opposition to Question 1, because it would have allowed

the potential for the proliferation of minority class protections for gays and lesbians, as supportive of gay rights, despite its perpetuation of the status quo.

The second time Maine voters confronted gay rights at the ballot box was in February of 1998. Voters in this election were asked whether or not to repeal a nondiscrimination law that would have afforded protection from discrimination based on sexual orientation in areas of employment, housing, public accommodation, and credit. Votes in favor of the 1998 Question 1 proposition were signaling a policy desire to repeal the nondiscrimination law, while voters who voted no were expressing a preference to maintain the existent nondiscrimination law. Thus, I have interpreted votes in favor of Question 1 as oppositional to gay rights since the initiative was geared toward preservation of the ability to discriminate in certain public policy areas based on sexual orientation; votes in opposition to the 1998 Question were interpreted as supportive of gay rights as they would have maintained the legislative act meant to prohibit discrimination.

Two years later Question 6 once again asked individuals to make a choice to adopt or reject a legislative act geared toward protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation in the areas of employment, housing, public accommodation, and credit was placed on the November ballot in Maine. However, Question 6 asked voters whether or not to ratify another legislative act expanding protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation, rather than the repeal question placed on the ballot two years prior. I have interpreted yes votes on Question 6 as supportive of gay rights because it asked voters to affirm and ratify legislation adopted to protect against

discrimination based on sexual orientation; no votes on Question 6 have been interpreted as oppositional to gay rights since they would have rejected the antidiscrimination legislation.

It would not be until 2009 when voters in Maine were again asked about gay rights on their ballots. Maine had tackled legislative adoption of same-sex marriage earlier in 2009 and then Governor John Baldacci signed the legislation into law. In opposition to the state legislature's action and the governor's support in May, opponents organized the November referendum to put the question to voters statewide in an off year where no federal candidates were on the ballot. Question 1 was framed as a "People's Veto" of the state law passed by the legislature and governor that allowed same-sex couples to marry. Because the vote was oriented toward repeal if successful, yes votes have been interpreted as opposition to gay rights since they would have rescinded the newly crafted ability for same-sex partners to have the various state legal benefits of marriage. No votes on the 2009 Question 1 proposition have been configured as supportive of gay rights since, if successful, the right to marry for same-sex couples guaranteed by the legislature and governor would have been preserved.

Because the Maine voters affirmed and adopted Question 1 in 2009, the legislation meant to establish same-sex marriage rights was rescinded. Three years later, in 2012, a citizen initiative again asked Maine voters, this time in the context of a presidential year election whether or not to pass " An act to allow marriage licenses for same-sex couples and protect religious freedom" (Maine, Secretary of State, 2013). In the 2012 Question 1, votes in support of the question, yes votes, have been interpreted as

supportive of gay rights since same-sex marriage would be established in Maine if the question was adopted; no votes were interpreted as oppositional to gay rights since the status quo would have been maintained and same-sex marriage been inaccessible under state law.

Table 2: Statewide Electoral Events

Year	Topic	Proposition #
Maine Gay Rights Referenda & Ballot Initiatives		
1998	Repeal of a nondiscrimination law based on homosexuality	1
2000	Ratification of a statute geared toward protection against discrimination because of homosexuality	6
2009	People's veto of statute passed and signed by governor granting same-sex marriage	1
2012	Allows Marriage Licenses for same-sex couples	1
	Source: Maine Secretary of State Office	
California Gay Rights Referenda & Ballot Initiatives		
Year	**Topic**	**Question #**
1978	Attempts ban on employment for homosexuals in California public educational system	6
1986	Classifies AIDS as a communcicable disease; would require registry and possible quarantine	64
2000	Defines marriage per state statute as between two persons of the opposite sex	22
2008	Constitutionally eliminates the right of same-sex couples to marriage	8
	Source: California Secretary of State Office	
Oregon Gay Rights Referenda & Ballot Initiatives		
Year	**Topic**	**Measure #**
1988	Revokes ban on discrimination imposed by governor	8
1992	Government cannot facilitate, must discourage homosexuality and other "behaviors"	9
1994	Amends constitution: government cannot approve, create protected classifications based on homosexuality	12
2000	Prohibits public school instruction encouraging, promoting, sanctioning homosexual and bisexual behavior	9
2004	Amends constitution: only marriage between one man and one woman legally recognized as marriage	36
	Source: Oregon Secretary of State Office	

Methods in Hypothesis II: Examining National and State Public Opinion

For evaluation of my second hypothesis, that there is a connection between the proliferation and state referenda and ballot initiatives on gay rights and increases in national public support for same-sex marriage, I use data from several national opinion polls to examine the potential relationship between the proliferation of gay rights ballot initiatives and changes in the rate of change as measured in national public opinion polls. I examine data points on attitudes across several national polls from major media and opinion research groups including Gallup, ABC News, Pew, and NBC/Wall Street Journal. I examine the rate of change in public opinion for each sample taken for each polling organization or media agency over the course of time since they began asking questions about attitudes toward the legality of same-sex marriage. The comprehensive list of national opinion data that I collected can be found in Table 3.0-3.2 of the Appendix; I utilized four national polling organizations and assembled more than 70 samples across those four organizations. While most of the polls were not consistent in the duration between samples, the opinion trend and trajectory across the polls is relatively similar over similar periods of time and the rate of change per year.

Ultimately, I examine the polling data in three distinct periods: one between the advent of state ballot initiatives on same-sex marriage beginning in 1996 and

ending in 2003, the second between 2004 and 2008, when the bulk of same-sex ballot initiatives appeared on statewide ballots, and again in the period between 2008 to the present, in the wake of significant national events in the gay rights movement more largely, like the end of Don't Ask Don't Tell, the President's endorsement of gay marriage, the heightened attention of the electoral victories for same-sex advocates at the polls in Minnesota, Maryland, Maine, and Washington in the November 2012 elections, and incredible media focus on high profile Supreme Court cases in March 2013 on the constitutionality of gay right issues surrounding California's Proposition 8 and the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. I examine the rate of change in each individual poll for each time period, average all the polls between each time period, and attempt to glean if the rate of change in public opinion is greater in periods where electoral activity and, public debate, and media attention has focused on same-sex marriage issues.

Methods in Hypothesis III: State Opinion Data and Political Culture

To distill the potential relationship between heightened referenda activity and public opinion, I examine state level opinion data from a variety of sources and measure it against states that have similar political culture, using Daniel Elazar's political culture classification system from his 1996 *American Federalism: A View from the States.* Elazar's political culture classification system has been used to analyze and interpret variances in state behavior to common issues or challenges each confronts. I use Elazar's classification to test states with the greatest incidence of referenda or ballot initiatives on

gay rights against a control group of states that have not endured the same level of public debate or campaigns about same-sex marriage. Moreover, I seek to determine whether states where the increased exposure and public dialogue that accompany statewide campaigns, particularly in California, Maine, and Oregon, acts as a catalyst for faster-than-average support, as measured in public-opinion polls for same-sex marriage in other states.

To accomplish this task I assembled a volume of private opinion polling data captured from a panoply of states (see page 36). Because a dearth of statewide polling data exists prior to 2008, I examine only the time period of heightened same-sex marriage activity between 2009-2013 to determine if my hypothesis is plausible. For specific years where multiple polls were in the field in a given state, I examine the average of all the polls for a given year and note with asterisks if the poll for that specific year was a composite of multiple samples and/or polling companies. I then examine the local trend and discern the average rate of change year-to-year, if possible. Given that there are some years without any statewide opinion data on the topic of same-sex marriage, the local trend line is limited because of the dearth of available data.

Elazar's political culture classification system has been used to analyze and interpret variances in state behavior and to understand common issues or challenges each state confronts. In conjunction with his classification scale, Elazar also conceptualized the states in the United States that had a sub-variant of his political culture, or, in some cases, a combination of political subcultures. Elazar's classification offers three broad political subcultures that he purports are unique to American political culture and were

formed from a "geology of political culture" that emanates from socioeconomic and cultural distinctions in the settlers of various regions of the United States; migration is used in Elazar's model to describe the proliferation and melding of political subcultures into regions of the country as American continental westward expansion evolved. Elazar's classification may best be described as sociopolitical device because it aspires to create a classification structure based on the mélange of geography, local culture, and politics unique to each state and its history (Elazar 1966).

The primary classifications of political subculture created by Elazar include Individualistic Political Culture, Moralistic Political Culture, and Traditionalistic Political Culture. Individualist political culture, according to Elazar, is based primarily on government's role for simple utilitarian reasons; it emphasizes limited intervention by the government or nongovernmental agencies to a bare minimum to preserve the uninterrupted rhythm of the marketplace. None of the states I examine fall into the wholly Individualistic model. Similarly, Elazar's conception of individualistic political culture is defined by motivations of some office holders to be "adequately compensated for their efforts." (Elazar 1966) This means that in Elazar's conception of the individualistic political culture, office holders understand well and may actually intend to reap the status and financial benefits of public service; he also goes on to describe that in this individualistic culture norms of self-service and patronage for the support of others are mutually understood and accepted by office holders and their constituencies alike.

Moralistic political culture, Elazar's second classification, primarily emphasizes "the commonwealth conception as the basis for democratic government." (Elazar 1966)

The author describes the moralistic political culture as one motivated by the best intentions of the human race and believes that government can promote good within society; in this way, moralistic culture deviates significantly from individualistic political culture for its fidelity to honesty, selfless service, and the orientation toward public welfare by those who govern. Ultimately, the largest contrast from the individualistic conception is the moralistic's focus on the role government can play in intervening into the realm of private enterprise when necessary on behalf of the public and maintenance of the community. It seems natural that many of the states where same-sex marriage has been approved are categorized under Elazar's classification as partially or wholly moralistic; these states include Vermont, Maine, Minnesota, Washington, California, New Hampshire, and Iowa. Interestingly, the moralistic political culture is dominant and describes two of the three states where same-sex marriage referenda have been most common: Oregon and Maine. California, which is classified as a moralistic and individualistic cultured state, is the other state where same-sex rights have occurred most frequently at the ballot box.

In order to determine whether there was a demonstrable and significant distinction in the rate of change in public support for same-sex marriage I compare and contrast Oregon and Maine each against two other states Elazar classified under the moralistic political culture. Michigan and Wisconsin are compared as control group states against Oregon because the fall into the same moralistic political culture under Elazar's classification; Colorado and Minnesota are compared against the rate of opinion change

in Maine. All of these states are categorized under Elazar's classification as states with Moralistic political cultures. California, on the other hand, has a dominant hybrid political culture between the moralistic and the individualistic. I test three other Moralistic-Individualistic politically cultured states, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Washington, against the rate of public opinion change in California.

Rather than simply calculate the average of opinion in these states over the time period examined, I calculate the local trend for the states investigated between years in the period between 2009 and 2013. As mentioned earlier, where multiple polls exist for one state in the same year, I use the average of available polls for that year and indicate whether or not it has been averaged using an asterisk in that year's data cell. A comprehensive index of the polling firms, samples, and dates of samples by state can be found in the Appendix in tables 4.0-4.2.

Chapter 4: Literature Review

Between recent court cases and state referenda raising the salience of same-sex marriage and gay civil rights, national polls have also consistently shown more than majority support for same-sex marriage (Pew Research, 2013; Gallup, 2013). However, scholarly inquiry has been challenged to address the puzzle of not just how opinion has changed, but why peoples' attitudes have changed. Clearly state institutions have played a role in bringing national salience to the topic of same-sex marriage; only recently has the federal government's role been more active in advocacy for gay rights. To understand the contours of the research on same-sex marriage and prospective connections between advances in gay rights and efforts to restrict them, I examined the dominant body of research on same-sex marriage, gay rights restricted and advanced at the state level, and public opinion in studies over the last 15 years. While I was unable to find any research that specifically touched on the possibility that efforts to restrict gay marriage have influenced growth in public opinion support for same-sex marriage or other gay rights, many of the studies corroborate a change in opinion in the wake of these efforts(Baunach, 2011; Baunach, Burgess, and Muse, 2010; Becker, 2012; Brewer, 2003; Eagen, 2010; Schafer & Shaw, 2009; Sherkat et. al, 2009). My research also reveals that historical attitudes on gay rights were fixed and largely unchanging, in part because no media elite opinion had mediated or molded public opinion (Brewer, 2008;.Sherkat et. al,

2010). To that point, only recently has scholarly analysis turned to an exploration of why public opinion has changed on same-sex marriage beyond the normal demographic traits that portend support for gay rights. Part of the difficulty in amassing scholarly information on the subject for this paper was the dearth of information that sought to explain why public opinion has changed, much less changed so dramatically over the last five years both nationally and within the states. Two clear strains of inquiry emerge on the subject of same-sex marriage and support for gay rights within the scholarly literature; there is an older literature that addressed the demographic groups where support for gay rights and same-sex marriage was most emergent (Alvarez & Brehm, 2002; Bowman, & O'Keefe, 2004; Brewer, 2003;Wilcox & Wolpert, 2002; Yang, 1997). Contemporary explanations of how and why attitudes have changed appear in literature authored within the last five years and are more dominant plausible explanations for the change (Becker & Scheufele, 2011; Ellison, C.G. & Ramos-Wada, A.I., 2011; Gaines, N. & Garand, J., 2010; Sherkat, D, Powell-Williams, M., Maddox, G. & de Vries, K. 2011). For purposes of framing the relevance of my research, I discuss the more contemporary alternative explanations for the change in attitude on same-sex marriage within the most recent research. To the extent that it helps explain recent trends, I also integrate some of the older demographic research that defined earlier scholarly work on attitudes toward gay rights and same-sex marriage.

A number of dominant themes emerged in the contemporary literature that portend support for same-sex civil rights, including marriage. The scholarly explainations for the quick change in public opinion, cohort succession, intracohort change, contact

theory, and exposure to various events and media relevant toward same-sex marriage are contextualized by a review of where these changes have been most pronounced. Surely if we are to understand the basis for why large segments of the public have changed their attitudes toward same-sex marriage we must understand how opinion has changed. For example, intracohort change and contact theory attempt to explain why public opinion has changed. What also requires discussion is a focused examination of where and how this change has been most dramatic amongst survey respondents and if it can help to illuminate how effective each explanation is for the quick rate of change. Similarly, if contact theory aspires to explain the quick rate of change in public opinion by pointing to familiarity with gays or lesbians in a familial or work context, additional attention to certain demographic groups where contact theory seems to capture a change in attitude can help us understand the potency of contact theory's potential explanatory power. The following section will build a comprehensive index of the group membership dynamics and demographic traits that generally, throughout the literature, predict support for same-sex marriage. If we are to understand how and why opinion about same-sex marriage has liberalized over the past twenty five years, we can learn a lot about the answers to these questions through an extrapolation of the specific segments of the population whose attitudes have changed the most. Moreover, the interdependent nature of many of the competing explanations behind the rate of change in support for same-sex marriage may insufficiently cover the array of groups where change seems most likely to occur. Who are they? Are these views acquired in the context of media or education? Might they be learned from an early age? Large segments of the literature seem to focus on a narrow range of possibilities to answer these questions. Naturally, some states have

older and younger populations, a better or less educated populous, and have ideological or urban centers that may make things like contact theory or intracohort change more plausible as explanations for the shift. Those factors, too, may be at play in addition to the role that electoral events at the state level on gay rights may play regarding attitudes in support for gay rights.

Cohort Succession

The most prominent explanation for the swift change in public opinion on the topic of gay marriage is cohort succession (Baunach, 2012; Sherkat et al., 2011; Treas, 2002). Cohort succession purports to explain the shift toward majority support for same-sex marriage by tracing the decline of older more conservative generations of Americans, and the rise of younger more socially liberal Americans. In other words, cohort succession asserts that younger individuals with attitudes more flexible to same-sex marriage rights replace older generations with more rigid conceptions of marriage and morality; this process takes place through natural age-determined mortality patterns. (Baunach, 2012; Sherkat et al., 2011; Treas, 2002)

Both scholarly literature and polling data illustrate the importance of age in the prediction of support for same-sex marriage. Very serious distinctions in public opinion exist across age are revealed. If there were a near law-like relationships amongst the survey data and scholarly research about public opinion and same-sex marriage, Youth

support for same-sex marriage would be a near universal truth. Thus, polls suggest that age has a significant factor on public opinion about homosexuality. (Baunach, 2011; Becker, 2012; Becker & Scheufele, 2011; Brewer, 2003; Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006) Opinion research and scholarly review of this data confirms that young people are generally more supportive toward same-sex rights than their older counterparts; not only are they more supportive, but they are generally more liberal than older Americans (Brewer, 2008).

Essential to the formation of opinions on the topic of same-sex marriage is religion- and large distinctions in adherence, practice, and self-reported religious affiliation exist across generational cohorts (Sherkat et. al, 2009). Because of the unique nature of America's religious identity, both historically, and comparatively, Americans tend to incorporate their religious values into their opinions and election preferences on a panoply of political and social issues. Not least of these, according to Sherket et. al, are issues like abortion, gender equality, and sexuality. To understand how religion influences public opinion, one must understand the unique nature religion plays in American life and culture.

Within the variety of scholarly literature on the topic of same-sex marriage a plethora of information exists on how religion impacts attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex civil rights. At the heart of this data emerges two separate but equally important strands that structure the potential opposition to same-sex marriage, based largely on moral assessments from sacred texts. The first suggests that an individual's specific religious tradition is a powerful predictor of potential support or opposition to

same-sex civil rights, especially same-sex marriage. Whether someone is mainline protestant, Jewish, Catholic, or Baptist has been demonstrated to offer a powerful and significant relationship between support or opposition to same-sex marriage. In this way, membership or identification within particular religious denomination can offer potential clues on the attitudes of an individual. The second strand of research on this demographic illustrates the relationship between the religiosity of an individual's faith in their life, largely measured by survey questions about the regularity of the individual's church attendance and literal interpretation of sacred religious texts, can also offer a powerful predictor of attitudes toward same-sex marriage.

Several large clear trends emerge; evangelical protestants are generally more likely to oppose same-sex marriage than their mainline protestant or Catholic counterparts. (Brewer, 2008) Furthermore, non-protestants are significantly more likely to support same-sex unions than Protestants (Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006). Furthermore, non-evangelical protestants have shown a greater degree of change over time in their attitude toward same-sex marriage than evangelical protestants, although some change in attitude toward support was measured even amongst evangelical protestants over the period between 1988-2006 (Baunach, 2011). Although social contact with homosexuals will be explored in greater detail later in this study, a 2012 study highlights that religious and ideological predispositions explain variance in support for same-sex marriage to a greater degree than social contact (Becker, 2012). A significant recurrent theme within the literature on attitudes toward same-sex marriage is the influence of morality, and traditional morality associated with evangelical Protestants and

other more socially conservative religious sects that seems to provide the foundation and fodder for the debate about moral values over equal rights within American politics. Since World War II, American society has become increasingly more secular, more individualistic, and more materially focused; this shift in society has also impacted public opinion (Becker & Scheufele, 2011). Additional social science research has codified the tendency of those highly involved in religious life to be more conservative than secular individuals (Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006). In her 2012 article "Changing Same-Sex Marriage Attitudes in America from 1988 through 2010," Dawn Baunach declares that secularism is at the core of change individual sexual attitude, one that liberalizes; she cites research that underscores the existence of a "secularization hypothesis,"- the notion that secularism, as measured by frequency of attendance at church services moderates intolerance and increases support for more sexually permissive behavior. This is measured primarily through opinion data that tracked lowering rates of disapproval toward homosexual relations amongst those whose infrequent church attendance classified them as secular. (Baunauch, 2012; Treas 2002) Ultimately, some of the research surveyed briefly posits the plausibility of the diminishing role of religion in some segments of American life and the corollary related decline in message cues developed from churches and pastors as a possible cause of diminished opposition to same-sex marriage. Further, attention is given to the possibility that secularism has led to the decline in opposition to same-sex marriage because of the greater focus on individualism, personal freedom, materialism, and education. Indeed, Americans who described having no religious preference in the 1990s doubled from 7 to 14 percent and cohort replacement accounted for 40% of the trend (Fischer & Hout, 2012). Astoundingly,

when Fischer and Hout reviewed and updated the data through 2012, 60% of the trend in decline of religious preference is attributable to cohort replacement and the tendency for generations including and born after baby boomers to have values that undermine traditional authority (Fischer & Hout, 2012). In essence, as older more religious Americans pass on, the American population is increasingly unattached to a religious preference.

Furthermore, according to Sherkat et. al, specific religious denominations play in the formation of opinion on social issues. Their research largely points to large religious subcultures, particularly among sectarian Protestant denominations who view homosexuality as morally wrong and thus more negatively as revealed within public opinion polls. Moreover, they point to areas with high densities of sectarian Christians as more liable to reject gay civil rights and same-sex marriage. As an extension of their body of research, they also find that specific religious beliefs help to explain variance in public opinion on the topic of same-sex marriage. According to their research, and a volume of other research cited within their own work, sectarian denominations increase selective fundamentalist interpretation of sacred texts and may reinforce prejudice or bigotry, thus leading to heightened literal interpretation of the same texts, and ultimately shaping militant attitudes toward the provision of civil rights for a variety of groups, including the LGBT community (Sherkat 2009).

An interesting and significant dimension of the analysis presented in the context of their review is the important consideration of the dearth of public awareness surrounding this issue of same-sex marriage as of 1988, when their analysis first begins

to track attitudes toward same-sex marriage in the GSS. It would not be until the early 1990s when the Hawaii Supreme Court ruled in *Baehr v. Miike* that denials of same-sex marriage licenses constituted a violation of the constitutional provision of equal protection. It was also during the same time period when the Republican party incorporated opposition to same-sex marriage as a platform item. Furthermore, not until the election of 2004 would the issue of same-sex marriage occupy so much attention on the national stage; the authors note that 11 states voted on the definition of marriage in November of 2004. In advance of the 2004 election, President George W. Bush gave his endorsement of the initiative to constitutionally define marriage as between one man and one woman, thus lending the effort presidential prestige and greater attention. The authors frame these events as important to the contour of the debate about same-sex marriage as a cross roads of religious factors that mediate factors of political conservatism on the same-sex marriage debate. Furthermore, they propose three expectations as hypotheses that govern political mobilization targeted toward the provision of civil rights for LGBT individuals: republicans are less supportive of marriage rights for same-sex couples, conservative ideology will negatively impact support for same-sex marriage, and the impact of sectarian association, religious participation, and fundamental beliefs work through identification as a Republican and through identification as politically conservative.

Most importantly, Sherkat et. al. cite generational cohorts as a significant element in the changing nature of attitudes toward same-sex marriage. Their analysis highlights the evolution of homosexuality as a taboo topic of discussion to a topic that receives a

abundance of public acceptance as a lifestyle. Their analysis cites an "omnipresence of sexual issues in varied media is both a source of social change, and a social influence on further shifts in opinions toward sexuality. For younger generations forming opinions about sexuality, coming to see GLBT persons in the open is likely humanizing, and generates toleration. However, for people enmeshed in religious and political ties imbued with homophobia, the public display of sexual variation may lead to backlash." (Sherkat et al, 2009.) It seems that some deeply-held beliefs, even amongst young people keep the humanizing power of interaction or exposure from reducing intolerance. The authors also claim that there has been an opinion backlash based in reaction to the extremist anti-gay social movements like Anita Bryant's Save Our Children, the fallout from scandals having to do with politicians, like Idaho's Larry Craig, and disgraced evangelical minister Ted Haggard's use of male prostitutes. Moreover, the culmination of issues like these, and moderating influence amongst younger voters on cumulative public opinion result in another series of hypotheses they present: 1) younger generational cohorts support same-sex marriage and liberalize from 1988-2008; 2) there will be smaller change on attitudes toward same-sex marriage amongst sectarian Protestants and religious fundamentalists between 1988-2008; 3) gaps between sectarian Protestants and intra-cohort peers will be smaller in later cohorts; 4) changes in support for same-sex marriage will be less amongst Republicans between 1988-2008; 5) differences between republicans and persons with alternative political identifications will decline in more recent younger cohorts.

The results of Sherkat et. al's statistical analysis of GSS survey data in 1988, 2004, and 2008 give rise to some interesting but relatively uncontroversial results. For instance, approval for same sex marriage has increased dramatically since 1988, where initially support for same-sex marriage stood at 11% and had risen to 39% by 2008. Analysis also confirmed significant distinctions in support for same-sex marriage between denominations. Their first two hypotheses confirmed that opposition to same-sex marriage was greater amongst those who described themselves as sectarian Protestants than the average GSS respondent. Additionally, opposition was more uniform amongst religious sectarians; the gap between sectarian Protestants and the average respondent grew between 1988-2008. Interestingly, in 1988, individuals who identified themselves as Republicans were not significantly different from Democrats or Independents in attitude toward same-sex marriage. However, by 2008, Republican sentiment showed a less dramatic change in public opinion in comparison to Democrats and Independents over time since 1988. Moreover, Republican support for same-sex marriage was significantly below other GSS respondents in 2008. The Sherkat hypotheses regarding cohort differences showed insignificant distinctions in the results of the 1988 survey, in contrast to their initial hypothesis. Their results only began to show significant distinctions in cohort opinions for those born between 1956-1964 beginning as a significant "forerunner" generation when compared against those who were born before 1940. Although, cohort effects for all but the forerunner generational cohort mentioned earlier, and the 1940-1950 cohort, were significantly more positive in 2006-2008.

Perhaps most interesting of all of the results discussed was the divergence of attitudes toward same-sex marriage after the issue became more politically salient and addressed by both of the major political parties. Also interesting was the distinction about the evolution of attitudes between mainline Protestants and sectarian protestants, who did not differ significantly in 1988 in their attitudes toward same-sex marriage. However, between 2006-2008, sectarian Protestants were much less likely to support same-sex marriage than their mainstream Protestant peers in the same time period. As expected, their hypotheses were confirmed when their analysis corroborated that Church attendance and biblical fundamentalism both had a significant negative effect on support for same-sex marriage, even when other measures of religious and political conservatism were taken into account. Additionally, even though 1988 demonstrated no significant difference between respondents attitudes toward same-sex and political party identification, by 2006-2008 Republican identification lowered the estimated odds of responding in a more favorable category on same-sex marriage by 12%; party identification became a significant predictor of views on same-sex marriage in the 2006-2008 data. Furthermore, political conservatism was found to have a strong negative impact on support for same-sex marriage in all of the years surveyed. Similarly, self-ratings of liberal-conservative became significant predictors of support for same-sex marriage between 1988 and 2006-2008. Other demographic groups like women showed more support for same-sex marriage than men. Education also has a strong positive effect on support for same-sex marriage in both 1988 and 2006-2008. Furthermore, in the 2006-2008 data, rural and Southern natives were significantly less supportive of same-sex

marriage, although distinctions between respondents did not significantly differ in the 1988 data.

Even though generally younger cohorts tend to be more supportive of same-sex marriage than older cohorts, the analysis demonstrates that younger cohorts of Republicans are substantially less supportive of same-sex marriage when compared to intra-cohort peers. The damning influence of religious orientation and political preference is dramatically documented in this line from their discussion:

> The similarity of religious and political effects by generation is remarkable. It appears that both religious affiliation and political identifications retard the development of tolerant orientations, even in younger cohorts which should have been affected by the dramatic changes in how sexuality was viewed during this period. Both religious and political factors appear to be important for the construction of oppositional generation units within cohorts. (Sherkat et. al. 2009 176)

What was once an obscure issue, where many Americans had little or no familiarity, has become a commonplace topic addressed in news, media, politics, and dinner table discussions (Sherkat et. al). Their research closes in one poignant and memorable line: "Our research shows that opposition to same-sex marriage is increasingly anchored among members of sectarian religious denominations, fundamentalist Christians, Republicans, and political conservatives," (Sherkat et. al 2009). The analysis also suggests that successive generational cohorts were progressively more liberal in their support for same-sex marriage born after 1945, with exception to those segments who were sectarian Protestants or Republicans. They go so far as to suggest that cohort replacement will play a strong role in overall value change and that "in just over a decade

the majority of Americans will support the legalization of same-sex marriage," (Sherkat et. al, 2009). It has taken less than half that time for public opinion to reach above majority levels in support of same-sex marriage. An interesting corroboration of the Sherkat analysis is available in Pew's recent work on tracking attitudes toward same-sex marriage by generational cohorts, see Figure 1 in the Appendix for an interesting graphic that represents the disparities in attitude by generation. Moreover, they also conclude by suggesting that the public policy debate would be better informed by acknowledging the religious and political communities where opposition and support can be found for same-sex marriage.

Somewhat problematically, however, is that the rate of change in public opinion in support for same-sex marriage has occurred at a rate more quickly than that which cohort succession alone would predict. Cohort succession alone cannot explain why the rate of change for support for same-sex marriage has been so quick because mortality rates, birth rates, and the overall replacement rates in the United States have slowed to less than replacement in recent years and remained relatively unchanged for much of the last ten years, according to the Centers for Disease Control (Hoyert, 2012). *The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage* dedicates a chapter toward exploration of public opinion and the reality of what cohort succession alone would mean on poll data: "...generational replacement is a very gradual process. Over time, it may well be that more citizens will discover that they know gay men and lesbians, though the most homophobic citizens may never have an associate come out to them. And over time, more Americans may come to

believe in the existence of a ‘gay gene,’ though the results of future scientific research are always uncertain (Rimmerman & Wilcox, 2007 238).

The phenomenon of increased support in public opinion as it relates to same-sex marriage is unique and has only developed over the last two decades. (Becker, 2011) This relationship between more conservative views toward same-sex marriage and older generations is demonstrated in a recent Pew Research report released in 2013. Generational groups were broken down between four different categories: the Silent Generation, those born between 1928-1948; the Baby Boom generation, those born between 1946-1964; the Gen X generation, those born between 1965 and 1980; and finally, the Millennial generation, those born after 1980. Between 2003 and 2012, the Pew report tracked changes amongst the generational cohorts that are listed above. The Millenial cohort demonstrated the greatest shift in support for same-sex marriage over the ten year period, a 19 percentage point increase from the average 51% reported for Millennials in 2003. The report also cites that where Millenials only occupied 9% of the adult U.S. population in 2003, they now occupy 27% of the adult population in 2013(Pew Research, 2013).

While cohort succession offers a compelling narrative driven by the age and demographic changes in the U.S. population, it only describes how attitudes have changed and are changing based on age and association with specific generational cohorts. Undoubtedly generational replacement will play a huge role in progressively eroding the opposition that is embedded in older generation as they expire and are replaced by more tolerant younger generations. The average life expectancy for those born in the Silent

Generation is 65.88 (Arias, 2012). This means that we have reached, or in many cases, exceeded the anticipated average life expectancy for many of those in the Silent Generation, suggesting that because people live longer and stretch beyond their cohort's anticipated life expectancy, the uptick in support for same-sex marriage cannot be simply attributed to the expiration of an entire older and less supportive generation of Americans. Furthermore, the Baby Boomer Generation has an anticipated average life expectancy of 68.8 years for both sexes and will not begin to phase out completely based on anticipated life expectancy and be replaced by Generation X until 2033, at the very earliest. Cohort Succession effectively explains part of the story of how public opinion has changed because of the rise of younger generally more tolerant, less religiously observant, and supportive generational cohorts, but it still does not explain why younger generations tend to be more supportive toward same-sex marriage in comparison to older generations.

Relevant to this reflection on cohort succession, efforts to restrict gay marriage were not exclusively the province of reliably conservative or Republican states. States like Wisconsin, Ohio, Oregon, Colorado, Michigan, and California all passed constitutional prohibitions on same-sex marriage. Demographic factors attributable to age, in some cases, may have been responsible for many of these states enacting these restrictions. Could the key to why, in some cases, a few of these states reversed course on their opposition be attributable to cohort succession and the expiration of older, less tolerant, and more religious segments of the population? If so, efforts to restrict gay marriage in states where there is a higher than average concentration of older and younger voters could portend a flip on the issue of same-sex marriage and help explain

why in the wake of these restrictions issue frames and narratives on justice, fairness, and equality have taken hold of a segment of the population less interested in authority and controlling religious predispositions and biases.

Contact Theory

One measure of the increased visibility of homosexuals in the United States was documented by a Gallup report released in May of 2011 that revealed that adults, on average, estimate that approximately 25% of the population is gay or lesbian (Gallup, 2011). In reality, a 2013 Gallup poll demonstrates that only 3.5% of the nation self-identify as gay or lesbian (Gallup, 2013). The disparity between perception and reality is a testament to the increased visibility of gays and lesbians not just in popular culture and news events, but in our day-to-day lives. This phenomena is not unique in the world of U.S. opinion poll demographic estimation; Americans have historically overestimated the size of the African American and Hispanic population, too. A 2001 Gallup poll illustrated that Americans estimated the African American population at 33%, when, in reality, at the same period it was only 12.3% of the U.S. population. The same poll found that Americans estimated the U.S. Hispanic population at 29%, where as in 2001 the population in the U.S. was 12.5% (Gallup, 2001). Similarly, a CBS March 2013 poll revealed that 61% of respondents report having a gay or lesbian colleague, close friend,

or relative. The same question was posed in the 2003 poll and only 44% of respondents then indicated that they knew someone in any of the same capacities, a 17 percentage point increase over a ten year period (CBS News, 2013). These figures underscore changes that lead some researchers and pollsters to point toward contact theory as another popular explanation identified in more recent scholarly literature on the topic of public opinion and increasing support for same-sex marriage. Contact theory is built upon the notion that regular interaction with gay or lesbian individuals within one's social network has a liberalizing impact on the level of political tolerance and support for homosexual civil rights policies and issues like same-sex marriage. (Becker & Scheufele, 2011; Brewer, 2008) The framework of contact theory comes from the field of social psychology and posits that personal contact with individuals or members of specific out-groups can reduce levels of discrimination and prejudice. (Becker & Scheufele, 2011; Allport, 1954) Largely left out of the discussion on contact theory is the elusive nature of human sexuality and how the entire premise is structured upon contact with openly gay or lesbian individuals. Obviously, people have contact with lesbians and gays where sexuality is an unknown, undisclosed, or unimportant dimension of contact; the entire premise of contact theory's impact, liberalizing attitudes towards homosexuals and same-sex marriage, is dependent upon a subject's awareness of an individual's sexuality and the openness of the homosexual in communication about their orientation.

The geographic region of the United States where someone lives is a significant predictor of their attitudes toward same-sex civil rights, including their support for same-sex marriage. Amongst the data and analysis reviewed, whether individuals lived in

urban, suburban, or rural settings helped to predict the given likelihood of support or opposition to same-sex marriage. Similarly, whether individuals lived in the South or Northern United States also plays a role in the likelihood of predicting support for same-sex marriage. More recent opinion research has even broken down attitude of respondents between the Northeastern, Southwestern, Western, and Southern regions of U.S. Research shows that rural residents and Southern natives are significantly less likely to support same-sex marriage than those of people who live in the Northern United States and/or lived in urban areas. (Baunach, 2011; Sherkat, Powell-Williams, Maddox, & de Vries, 2011) Research has also confirmed that the relationship between living in a rural areal and increased opposition to same-sex marriage. This trend seems to transcend racial boundaries and exists among rural latinos specifically, as it does for the general opinion data that is not correlated by race (Ellison, Acevedo, & Ramos-Wada, 2011). Location also seems to play a role in how much a person may have exposure or familiarity with homosexuals. A 2007 Pew Research study demonstrated that individuals in the south were less likely to know someone who was gay than were people in the Northeast or West. Those who reside in rural areas are also less likely to know gay people than their urban or suburban counterparts (Pew Research, 2007, 2013).

Opinion data released from both Pew and Gallup affirms the relationship described in some of the scholarly literature. In a 2012 report issued by Gallup Inc., the only region of the country to register support for same-sex marriage under 50% was the South, at 40%; those who resided in the East supported same-sex marriage by 56%, those in the Midwest by 53%, and those in the West by 55%. The 2012-2013 Pew Research

poll revealed a similar cleavage in opinion between geographic regions. Amongst the regions, only the South and the Midwest were below 50% of support in favor of same-sex marriage, with 39 and 48 percentage points in support of same-sex marriage by each region respectively. The Northeast registered support for same-sex marriage at 58%, the West at 53%.

In her 2012 article "Determinants of Public Support for Same-Sex Marriage: Generational Cohorts, Social Contact, and Shifting Attitudes*"*, Amy Becker points to several interdependent relatively new elements as significant predictors of support for gay rights: age, generational change, and social contact. Becker's analysis examines the prospective relationship between opinions of those who know and are familiar with homosexuals and those who are not, and then distills the distinctions in support for gay marriage amongst the two demographic constituencies of age and generational cohort membership. Becker conducts quantitative analysis to examine how the degree of personal contact with homosexuals impacts support for gay marriage. She cites age and more youthful generational opinions toward marriage- particularly views that see marriage as increasingly obsolete and the parallel rejection of past normative gender roles within it, where males are primary providers- as one source of the change in public opinion . Like other scholars, she cites a host of academic work that points to generational replacement as a factor in the gradual liberalization of public opinion on gay marriage. Another prospective element she introduces in the context of her analysis is the nature of the way younger cohorts perceive the meaning and importance of marriage, particularly as attitudes liberalize about it within younger cohorts; younger cohorts tend

to see marriage as obsolete in comparison to older generations according to Becker. She also insists that her analysis is somewhat distinct from other analysis on the determinants of gay marriage since it "attempts to bridge this gap and offer a more complete picture of the changing dynamics of public opinion toward gay civil rights issues in the United States by concurrently considering the role of social contact, attitudes toward same-sex parent families, and generational affiliation as predictors influencing public support for same-sex marriage." (Becker 2012)

Becker uses opinion data from Pew Research Center's January 2010 Millennial Survey to explore her synthesis of social contact, attitudes, and generational factors as significant predictors of support for same-sex marriage. Her data suggests that social contact with homosexuals differed significantly across generations; it also reveals an inverse relationship between age and having a close family member or friend who is gay. Similarly, the attitudes toward same-sex parent families varied across generations, with attitudes inversely related to age. Additionally, support for same sex marriage also varied across generations according to Becker's analysis. Again, attitudes toward same sex marriage were supported inversely when related to age, with millennials most supportive and members of the silent generation least supportive.

Becker posits that the traditional demographic variables that generally lend themselves toward explanation of support for same-sex marriage pale in comparison toward the predictive power of being a millennial or a member of generation X. She indicates that traditional variables like gender and education only explain a small amount of variance when compared to the positive predictive power of cohort membership in the

aforementioned generations. Other variables lend more predictive properties toward support for same-sex marriage according to Becker. Like much of the other literature, political and religious dispositions remain significant predictors in Becker's analysis. Most interestingly, support for same-sex parent families and social contact remained significant predictors of support for same-sex marriage even when Becker controlled for traditional demographic, political, and religious variables. In other words, Becker's research confirms what intuition may have suggested: age and generational membership are related to support for same-sex marriage, and that younger generations, like millennials, who are the most likely to support same-sex parent families, support for same-sex marriage, and have the highest degree of social contact with gays and lesbians. However, the social contact dimension and its impact on prediction of support for same-sex marriage is not exclusive to generational cohort membership. Becker's model suggests that the power of social contact with gay and lesbians on support for same-sex marriage may transcend the traditional predictive demographics of religious and value predispositions despite their demonstrable enduring strength in her own study. (Becker 2012) Becker's quantitative analysis confirms the influence of age and social contact on support for same-sex marriage, where other scholarship as previously articulated has posited that changes in public opinion may be attributable to cohort succession, where one generation is succeeded by a more liberal and supportive attitude toward same-sex marriage. Becker's study is useful since it highlights the steady influence of religion and personal ideology on public opinion, but introduces the moderating influence of age and social contact on public opinion, even on those who may be more religiously or ideologically opposed to same-sex marriage.

Gaines and Garand uncover similar results in their 2009 article "Morality, Equality, or Locality: Analyzing the Determinants of Support for Same-Sex Marriage". As their article makes clear, there exist a variety of essential demographic predictors for support of same-sex marriage; the authors point toward liberals, women, the highly educated, urban dwellers, and whites as generally more supportive of same-sex marriage. However, their article aspires to trace individual attitudes toward same-sex marriage along a variety of independent variable clusters. They use 2004 American National Election Studies (ANES) data to examine a variety of conventional variables on support for same-sex marriage; the conventional variables they test include moral and religious attitudes and traditions, attitudes towards gay and lesbians, gender roles and women's rights, support for minority civil rights, symbolic politics, general demographic attributes, and county-level context. They also merge the ANES data with data from the U.S. Census to explore the possible relationship between same-sex partnered households and the context of those living in that context and levels of support for same-sex marriage. In other words, they sought to determine whether or not living near or around same-sex couples impacted support for same-sex marriage. Conversely, it could also be argued that gays, like other groups, tend to self-select places to live where their relationship and orientation would be welcome and unquestioned. However, the Gaines and Garand piece fits nicely into the notion that contact with gays and lesbians may increase support for gay rights.

The most interesting variables tested in the 2009 article include the relationships between gender roles and women's rights, support for Black Civil Rights, contact and

context near or around gays and lesbians, and symbolic politics. The aforementioned measures incorporated into the Gaines and Garand article are determined in the following ways: using a feeling thermometer scale for feminists, level of agreement that women demanding equality seek special favors, level of agreement that women miss good jobs because of discrimination, and level of agreement that women's complaining about harassment causes problems. They also used a 7-point scale to measure respondent's beliefs about what the current role of women should be in society where attitudes that expressed support for women playing more traditional roles scored a 0, to 6 indicating that women should have equal roles. Support for black civil rights was also explored in the context of support for same-sex marriage, individuals were asked questions concerning their sympathies for expanded opportunities and rights for blacks including support for government assistance to blacks, support for government imposed policies directed toward fair employment for blacks, support for a statement that history has made it more difficult for blacks to succeed, agreement with an assertion that blacks have less than they deserve, and support for preferential hiring for blacks.

The last two variables they included in their study as potentially indicative of support for same-sex marriage were contact and context with gays and lesbians as well as symbolic politics, the process of being socialized to support a policy or idea even though it may not be in one's own self –interest to do so. The context variable was measured by merging data obtained from the U.S. Census, the Gay and Lesbian Atlas, and the ANES data set. Symbolic politics, as broadly described above, were measured by a 7-point

scale ranging from 0, strong Democrat, to 6, strong Republican; an index of ideology was also used in this category with 0 indicative of a strong liberal and 6 as strong conservative.

The results of their 2009 study corroborate a wealth of knowledge about public opinion and gay marriage that has been highlighted within other literature: morality and religion play a controlling and overriding influence on public opinion concerning not just gay rights but attitudes toward gays and lesbians more generally, one that potentially retards the influence of youth, contact, or media exposure. Additionally, the link between conservative ideology and opposition to same-sex marriage is one of the most powerful predictors amongst the literature surveyed herein. Overall, conservative political ideology and self-described political association with the Republican party is a significant predictive trait for opposition to same-sex marriage; much like advanced age, support for the Republican party, and even in some cases, religion. Social science and public opinion research has demonstrated that self-described political conservatives oppose same-sex marriage more uniformly than other demographic groups (Becker A.B, "Determinants of public support for same-sex marriage"; Brewer, 2008; Pew Research Center, 2006, 2013).

However, their analysis did not establish a significant relationship between attitudes towards civil rights for African Americans and attitudes toward women's rights: "One of our most interesting findings relates to the null effect of attitudes toward civil rights for black Americans on attitudes toward same-sex marriage. If civil rights for blacks and gays are linked in the minds of the mass public, one would expect support for black civil rights to be a strong predictor of support for same-sex marriage. Based on our results...it is difficult to find much support for this hypothesis" (Gaines and Garand,

2009). Their analysis also revealed distinctions in the type of opinions that conditioned support for same-sex marriage based on gender roles: those who support equal gender roles are related to support for same-sex marriage, but support for women's rights did not have a discernible effect on support for same-sex marriage.

Like previous research, their data did support a relationship between ideology and support for same-sex marriage, but not a strong relationship when controlled for other variables. Identification as a Republican in this analysis did not have a discernible effect on respondents' support for same-sex marriage. On the other hand, their analysis did reinforce existent academic data that shows women as more supportive toward gays and lesbians than men. Gender plays a major role in the evolving debate about same-sex rights. Whether the distinction exists on purely self-identified political party allegiance, or on measures of a compassion index, women, cumulatively, view the world around them differently than men (Wilcox, 2008). Women have more persistently supported the Democratic party's nominee in every presidential election since 1980 (Wilcox, 2008). Women, according to survey data, also have more liberal views on policy issues like healthcare, education, and child care (Alvarez and McCaffery, 2003). According to a panoply of social science opinion research, women are also much more likely to support gay marriage (Becker & Scheufele, 2011; Neldorf and Morin, 2007; Rimmerman & Wilcox, 2007).

Some attention has been given to the prospective reasons for the distinction between male and female opinion and the variation in attitude toward homosexuals, homosexual relations, and same-sex civil rights, like marriage. Initial explorations of the

topic in the 1990s posited the potential inflexibility of male perceived gender roles as a reason for more negative attitudes toward homosexuality and same-sex civil rights (Kite and Whitley, 1996). While the gap on attitudes toward same-sex marriage is not wide between the genders, it is relatively consistent over time; Pew Research produced an interesting graphic that contextualizes the gender gap between support for same-sex marriage between 2001-2012. I have included the graphic as Figure 2 within the Appendix.

Worth consideration in future studies is whether or not the turnout in statewide elections where gay rights are on the ballot deviate significantly from other elections and normal rates of female participation. Furthermore, perhaps the states with the most electoral activity on gay rights have an entirely unique imbalance of gender participation in special elections over time that have allowed California, Oregon, and Maine to encounter questions about gay rights at the ballot so frequently.

Female voters, since 1964, have exceeded their males counterparts in voting in presidential elections (Center for American Women and Politics, 2011; Washington Post, 2013) and women are generally more supportive of same-sex marriage than men. Since the United States Supreme Court resisted any hugely groundbreaking decisions in the June 2013 *Hollingsworth* and *Windsor* cases, decisions which tested the framework of state's rights over gay rights and the constitutionality of prohibitions on same-sex marriage at the federal level, proponents are well-advised to tailor their efforts to the female electoral powerhouse.

Proponents of contact theory also claim that physical living context does not have a significant effect on support for same-sex marriage; the data presented by Gaines and Garand suggests, at least for the snapshot of the 2004 presidential election, suggests that those individuals who lived in communities with a large density of same-sex partnered households were no more likely to support same-sex marriage. However, some of their empirical evidence suggests that a small subset of individuals who live in counties with above average populations of same-sex households there was a strong interaction effect for attitudes toward gay and lesbians and those whose home was in counties with higher percentage of same-sex partnered households. This gives some credibility to the notion of contact theory, that individuals who live and commonly interact with a minority, will demonstrate a greater propensity toward tolerance and thus become more supportive of policies supporting that minority group. All in all, the data presented in the Gaines and Garand analysis does not significantly deviate from previous work done on the topic of public opinion and the topic of same-sex marriage. The authors remind readers that the public does not seem to see the quest for same-sex civil rights as similar to those for civil rights, nor is there a relationship between higher than average presence of same-sex partnered households and support for same-sex marriage. In the end, according to Gaines and Garand, morality, rather than constructivist notions of equality, or geographic location, seems to be the strongest predictor of opinion toward same-sex marriage.

Furthermore, additional social science research has found evidence to support that "personal contact with members of 'least-liked groups' can have a positive impact on traditional measures of political tolerance, or the 'willingness to put up with those things

one rejects or opposes."(Becker & Scheufele, 2011- 328) Paul Brewer's *Value War* expounded on the potential power of contact theory and established a relationship between greater increased contact with gay men and lesbians and an increase attitude and opinion. In total, the quantitative analysis of the aforementioned scholars is overwhelmingly supportive of the concept of contact theory as an important ingredient in increasing support for same-sex marriage. Scholarly analysis has also been corroborated by very recent public opinion data that confirms that contact with gays and lesbians is the top self-identified reasons amongst those whose minds have changed on the topic of same-sex marriage (Pew Research, 2013). What is not as clear is the varying degrees of ideological orientation and whether or not they hold up in the face of a public more and more normalized toward contact with homosexuals. However, human sexuality does not solely exist in a binary state, where people are exclusively heterosexual or homosexual; sexuality is also a matter of perception, where people may or may not know about the sexuality of their friends, family, or co-workers. Thus, describing contact with gays and lesbians as an influencing factor on changed attitudes may be a heuristic means of describing a reduction in prejudice. It seems likely that the actual number of people who are gay and lesbian have not changed as a percentage of the population, meaning that the increasing public acknowledgement of homosexuality within peer, family, and work groups is an important psychological and sociological development that has ushered in greater tolerance. In reality, there have always been homosexuals and bisexuals- and people have always had contact with them, regardless of whether or not they were aware of their self-identified sexuality. In the final analysis, contact with homosexuals emerges as the strongest attribute self-selected by poll respondents when asked why their opinion

has shifted on the topic of same-sex marriage; academic research corroborates the durability of this relationship and underscores the important role it has played in the public opinion landscape on same-sex marriage and on gay rights more broadly.

Intracohort Change

Intracohort change describes demonstrable changes in individual attitude over time across generational gaps. Essentially, intracohort change describes the simple reflection of changed minds on the topic of gay rights, particularly same-sex marriage. Recent research has confirmed that the largest change in attitudes toward same-sex marriage between 1988 and 2006 occurred because of intracohort change (Baunach, 2010, 2012; Treas, 2002); this change has been documented across all age cohorts. Baunach's article uses the General Social Survey and survey responses collected between 1988 and 2006 to distill the changes in public opinion toward gay marriage; she notes that the GSS first started asking questions about gay marriage in 1988, again in 2004, and again in 2006. Her data focuses primarily on the end points of the trend so as to draw contrasts and provide the earliest "national-level probability data on the topic." (Baunach, 2010) This is relevant since there is a dearth of data on the topic of attitudes toward gay marriage preceding 2003. Baunach takes note of the mirrored relationship between attitudes towards homosexuals more generally and the evolution of attitudes toward gay marriage. Attention is given to the evolution of public opinion toward homosexuality and homosexual rights as it evolved through the late 20th century to where it now enjoys supermajority levels of support in public opinion polls.

Dawn Michelle Baunach's 2011 article "Decomposing Trends in Attitudes Toward Gay Marriage, 1988-2006" examines the emergent trends in support for gay marriage based on generational changes and the impact of current events on attitude changes. Her research is distinct in contrast to the Shaw and Scheufele article since it focuses on demographic changes, two dynamics that Baunach refers to as intracohort change and the cohort succession effect. Furthermore, Baunach points to the change in message framing by gay marriage supporters and significant events as a prospective alternative explanations for the shift in attitudes of those who used to disapprove of gay marriage in 1988 and who had changed their opinions by 2006.

The strength of Baunach's analysis about attitude trends toward same-sex marriage is where she focuses on why attitudes have changed. Her analysis posits that modified message "framing" in advocacy of gay marriage as an equality issue has changed over time to become more effective and thus changed the minds and attitudes of certain individuals as reflected in public opinion polls. In particular, she contends that this constructivist explanation of the potential source of the change in public opinion is importance since individuals are not merely consumers of media messages and frames, but communicate them and actively engage in discourse that, in the aggregate, changes attitudes in public opinion on the topic vis-a-vis opinion poll data. The other potential cause of change in attitudes toward gay marriage, she contends, could be traced to current events and issues involving the gay rights movement that underscore the importance of the equality message frame: "...the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, the gay rights movement, various entertainments (Ellen, Will and Grace, Queer Eye for the Straight

Guy, Brokeback Mountain, etc.) the decoupling of HIV/AIDS and homosexuality, that fewer people think that homosexuality is a "choice," and the "outings" of celebrities and other gay men and lesbians are used in or employed an equality/tolerance framing and could have had a more liberalizing effect on opinion over time" (Baunach, 2010). This aspect of her analysis is diluted because it is unsubstantiated beyond mere speculation.

The second aspect of Baunach's article analyzes the attitude trend concerning gay marriage; here she introduces the general processes that distinguishes the framework of attitude trend analysis: population changes or individuals' shifting views on a topic. Here she cites two different processes at play in trend analysis, the first related to population shifts that occur at a societal-level. These societal level changes are explained by generational replacement, where one successive "birth cohort" replaces an older cohort, which I have discussed earlier. Because attitudes shift to reflect the sentiments of the later cohort, there is slow change since replacement must take place naturally. Baunach contends that successive cohort changes in attitude are a natural process over time. For example, if we examine the long-term ideological changes in the wake of World-War II, she claims that concepts like individualism, secularization, and materialism are driven by modernity and thus evolve as successive birth cohorts replace older cohorts with new ideologies. The other process at play she describes as intracohort change: the process describes how as individuals go through their lives and are exposed to new ideas, people, and events, these interactions may have the propensity to impact their opinions. Baunach claims that this is the other element of trend analysis that may explain the attitudinal shifts in public opinion polls on gay marriage.

Baunach brings the various aspects of her analysis together to answer two important questions in the quest to better understand shifting attitudes toward gay marriage: a) why have attitudes changed over time toward gay marriage?; b) How have attitudes toward gay marriage changed over time? Baunach answers by establishing a relationship between new innovations in message frames and societal events that underscore them to answer the "why" question. She answers the how question more convincingly with her analysis on the change in public opinion as attributable to cohort succession and intracohort change. Most importantly, her analysis revealed that intracohort change was responsible for the majority of the change in attitudes toward gay marriage. This data point suggests that attitude changes are more attributable to changed minds toward the topic of gay marriage than to the replacement of older generations by younger more tolerant generations.

Baunach's recent work has suggested that part of the reason for the persistence of large changes within and across cohorts over time has to do with the new message frames and shifts in cultural values that individuals are exposed to over time. Baunach posits a useful way of thinking about the forces that have impacted how attitudes have changed toward same-sex marriage, and the separate, perhaps more important question, about why they have changed; cultural shifts and new message frames from the media and elites provide the genesis for why attitudes have changed, while concepts like cohort succession and intracohort change are the vehicles for how they have changed and been measured in public opinion. Intracohort change is conceptually important to this analysis because it fills the very large gap in assumptions about cohort replacement. Attempting to

explain the change in attitude toward same-sex marriage only through the scope of generational replacement is instinctively and analytically inadequate because public opinion is not static and often malleable.

In their 2009 article "The Polls- Trends Tolerance in the United States," Chelsea Schafer and Greg Shaw trace the contours of public opinion on a host of groups in the United States that have typically been held with little regard in polls. Schafer and Shaw examine survey data to examine trends amongst these typically unpopular groups and their rights to act and advocate their lifestyle or perspectives. Among the groups highlighted by Shaw and Schafer are homosexuals and the evolution in public attitude toward them over the last decade. Amongst their findings, Shaw and Schafer note that attitudes toward homosexuals in general have been moving in their favor more quickly than amongst other groups noting, "Gay and lesbian people perhaps have enjoyed the largest shift in public opinion during the past decade and a half, particularly in the realm of civil rights." Shafer and Shaw note that the increase in support for homosexuals may mean that the intolerance that they faced may have shifted to other outgroups, like Muslims. Of particular importance to their study is that there is a broad pattern of growing acceptance for people whose lifestyles, beliefs, and ethnicity are not like their own.

Other processes within society could also help to explain the dynamic of changed minds on the topic of same-sex marriage or gay rights more generally. The changing scope of education in the United States may also play a role in forming attitudes towards gay rights. There exists a significant amount of scholarly literature on the disparities

between the attitudes of the educated and less educated in American politics. Educational attainment is generally related to more progressive or liberal attitudes in matters of social and political equality (Brewer, 2008). Over and over again opinion research data has corroborated the relationship between educational attainment and public opinion on a panoply of social issues. As related to support for same-sex marriage, however, educational disparities explain some variance in public attitudes toward the provision of civil marriage equality but not the same strength demonstrated in other demographic or identity attributes. Pew Research released a poll in October of 2009 that found a narrow plurality of voters with a college degree supported same-sex marriage; 49% of those surveyed with a college degree indicated support, while 43% of the same group opposed the policy. Interestingly, the same relationship between education and attitude emerged in survey questions about civil unions and the morality of homosexuality. The same poll revealed a whopping 70% of those with a college degree in favor of civil unions for same-sex couples; amongst those who had only some college, the percentage remained well-above majority level at 62%. Only amongst those who had a high school diploma or less did support for civil unions dip below majority level at 47%. Similar opinion cleavages existed when respondents were asked about the morality of homosexual behavior (Pew Research, 2009).

Similar results have been highlighted by scholars via election survey analysis from the National Election Studies 2004 survey. Additional research suggests that the impact of change in attitudes toward same-sex marriage has been more pronounced amongst those with more education than less, meaning that those with more education

than less are more likely to demonstrate a shift in opinion on the topic (Baunach, 2011). The impact of education on attitudes toward same-sex marriage does not seem to be limited to those in younger generations. In fact, a 2011 study found that higher levels of education were positively linked to support for gay marriage across all generations (Becker & Scheufele, 2011). The relationship between education and support for same-sex marriage appears to be one of the more durable demographic predictors on the topic. Evidence its durability exists in the most recent 2013 Pew Research Center poll that focused on the topic of same-sex marriage (Pew Research Center, 2013).

Paul Brewer posits that the significant disparities in attitude toward same-sex marriage exist by educational attainment because of the educational process itself, an almost implicit nod to the concept of the transformative power of education to change attitudes because of exposure to a new idea or series of concepts and knowledge. Brewer contends that one possible explanation for the distinction in opinion by education comes from the pro-gay rights and pro-equality messages that may emerge from faculty or in college coursework. The other potential reason presented in *Value War* emerges from tendency of the more educated to be attuned to the messages of "political, social, and scientific elites." (Brewer, 2008 31) Questions emerge for further research and consideration on the topic of how education may mediate attitudes toward social issues, like same-sex marriage; how has educational attainment changed in the United States and are there studies to survey social attitudes of students before and after their education?

While education serves as one hallmark potential indicator of why individuals have changed their mind, several other themes also become clear: certain demographic

groups within cohorts have demonstrated a propensity for greater change over time than others despite that, as mentioned earlier, intracohort shifts in attitude toward same-sex marriage have changed across all generations, even amongst those who describe themselves as conservative. Polling firms like Gallup, Pew, and independently commissioned polls for television networks and newspapers have captured this dynamic. Some even now place questions on the poll asking respondents if they have changed their mind and if so, why. Across all adults in the 2013 Pew Research Center poll, 49% indicated support for same-sex marriage. Since 2003, this change in support for allowing gays and lesbians to marry has undergone a 16 percentage point increase; when broken down by generation, Millennials have undergone the greatest shift in support for legal same-sex marriage with a 19 percentage point shift from 51% in 2003. Interestingly, the Baby Boom generation demonstrated the smallest shift amongst all generations, from 33% to 38%, while a higher percentage of those in the Silent generation and Generation X showed a shift in their attitudes toward legal same-sex marriage, albeit smaller than the Millennial segment (Pew Research, 2013).

Notably, differences persist in attitudes toward same-sex marriage when examined by race; these differences are important when examining the overall change to majority support for same-sex marriage because the racial landscape of America is changing. States like Oregon and Maine are far from the most diverse states in the Union; Oregon's population stands at only 2% African American and 12.2% Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2012) . Maine, in 2012, had only 1.3% of its population estimated as African American and 1.4% Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2012). California, on the

other hand, had an estimated African American population of 6.6% and Hispanic/Latino population of 38.2%. Most specifically, the differences between African American attitudes toward same-sex civil rights and white or latino attitudes are markedly different. (Brewer, 2008) Scholarly research and opinion data continually reinforce the dearth of support amongst African Americans for same-sex marriage, particularly when compared to white Americans. (Baunauch, 2011;Sherkat, Powell-Williams, Maddox, & de Vries, 2010; Sherkat, de Vries, & Creek, 2010) While African Americans tend to be liberal in their attitudes toward a number of policy areas like affirmative action, social welfare programs, and their opposition to capital punishment- this progressive policy streak has not translated into support for same-sex marriage. Why is this the case?

Volumes of scholarly research and opinion data indicate that adherence to evangelical strands of Protestantism may explain the distinction between races. (Sherkat, de Vries, & Creek, 2010) Some of this research has gone as far to list specific religious denominations as responsible for the disparity between the whites and blacks when it comes to same-sex marriage:

> Many activists and commentators have argued that African-American religiosity is primarily responsible for their conservative views about homosexuality and same-sex marriage, and a recent analysis of Proposition 8 voting supports that conclusion (Egan and Sherrill, 2009). The majority of African Americans hold affiliations in Baptists and other sectarian denominations, such as the Church of God in Christ, and African Americans have the highest rate of religious participation of any subgroup of the U.S. population. Yet, compared to white conservative Protestant denominations, African-American denominations play a quite different political role, and this may alter the relationship between religious factors and support for same-sex marriage. (Sherkat, de Vries, & Creek, 2010)

Furthermore, the distinctions between attitude toward same-sex marriage between whites and blacks has only grown over time. Paul Brewer notes in *Value War* that while attitudes toward policy areas like employment non-discrimination toward homosexuals in the work environment and allowing gays to serve openly in the military were on par with white respondents earlier in opinion research, disparities have seemed to grow over time. (Brewer 28, 2008) He also notes that the change in public opinion on this issue reflects some confounding puzzles that are left unanswered by research. For instance, we find that where African Americans were as or more likely to support laws against employment discrimination and policies allowing gays to serve openly in the military, later research shows a reversal, with white respondents significantly more likely to support policies like gay adoption and same-sex marriage.

In recent opinion data released in March of 2013, the relationship between increased support amongst white respondents is affirmed. The Pew Research poll released in March 2013 revealed a continuing gap between whites and blacks and their attitudes toward same-sex marriage; 40% of black respondents overall favored legal same-sex marriages, compared to 49% of white respondents (Pew Research, 2013). While the distinction between African-Americans and whites in the United States persists- both racial segments of the United States population have changed their attitudes significantly over the last ten years. In 2003, only 32% of white respondents supported legal same-sex marriage. Similarly, only 27% of blacks surveyed in 2003 supported legal same-sex marriages; a change of 17 and 13 percentage points respectively (Pew Research Center, 2013). While the rate of change toward support for same-sex marriage

amongst black Americans is less than among white Americans, it remains to be seen whether or not there will be a similar trajectory of support within racial communities as there has been in the white population of the United States. Future public opinion trend analysis may reveal accelerated support within racial communities- a factor that would impact some states and regions, particularly in the South, more than others as they confront past restrictions on same-sex marriage and other gay rights.

Obviously there are other racial dimensions to consider when examining the sources of changing attitudes of Americans on same-sex marriage. Latino and Asian-Americans occupy a growing and important role in the changing contours of the same-sex marriage debate in the United States because of the rapidly changing composition of the U.S. population and the electoral power that will come with those demographic changes. Largely unaddressed are examinations of Latino and Asian-American attitudes within the research about trends in public attitudes toward same-sex marriage. This is a particularly large omission since Latino Americans have overtaken African Americans as the largest U.S. minority group at 16.9% of the entire population, whereas the black population is estimated at 13.1% (U.S. Census, 2012). Only recently has attention been given to the evolution of attitude amongst Latinos. A 2011 study cites that like African Americans, Latino attitudes on the topic of same-sex marriage are largely the byproduct of their religious beliefs and habits, with Latino evangelicals Protestants and sectarian groups the most opposed to same-sex marriage. (Ellison, Acevedo, & Ramos-Wada, 2011) The same report shows that, like African Americans, Latinos have Democratic party leanings but adhere to more conservative cultural values that their views on the

topic of same-sex marriage. However, initial data as discussed in this and earlier sections, suggests that an intersection of secularization, contact with homosexuals, and a significantly younger and racially diverse composition within the United States will change the opinion landscape. Herein lies the next great challenge for advocates of gay rights, to identify and mobilize these constituencies of supporters who will play an evolving and increasingly larger role in the gay rights debate as time persists.

There exist a few ways to determine who amongst survey respondents have demonstrated the greatest propensity to change their mind and attitude about legal same-sex marriage. One way to evaluate who has demonstrated this capacity to change is to ask within the survey, which Pew did in their most recent poll. Of the 49% of respondents who indicated support for legal same-sex marriage in the 2013, 33% indicated that they had always held that position. However, 14% of that same group self-reported that they had changed their mind; this means that 14% of the American population surveyed in the 2013 poll have changed their mind on the topic of same-sex marriage. Of those who indicate support for legal same-sex marriage in 2013, 28% have changed their minds. In contrast, amongst those who oppose same-sex marriage, 41% of the 44% indicate that they have always been opposed to it. The same Pew poll also sought to understand why individuals who had acknowledged a change in their attitude had shifted their opinion. The Pew research poll asked respondents what caused them to change their mind and the open-ended responses are illustrative of one key concept discussed earlier in this section, contact theory. Of those who indicated their attitude had shifted 32% cited familiarity with someone who is homosexual as a reason, 25% cited a greater open-mindedness and

thought about it as they have aged, with other segments citing gay marriage's inevitability, a rapidly changing world, and freedom to choose love and happiness without government interference.

Another way to evaluate what segments of respondents have demonstrated a greater susceptibility to intracohort change is through examination of groups where change in support for same-sex marriage been the most pronounced. Among self-described Democrats, ideological moderates, Liberal Democrats, Democrats aged between 50-64, Independents aged between 18-29, White mainline protestants who attend church weekly or more, White mainline protestants above age 65, white Democrats, all whites 65 and over, and Catholics over 65, the change has been dramatically larger in comparison to other segments of the population, with swings in support over 20 percentage points greater than their levels measured in 2003. (Pew Research, 2013)

What becomes clear from the above reflection on intracohort change is that minds have changed about same-sex marriage in America; whether or not they are best measured by open-ended responses on opinion poll questions, or by measuring where the shift in opinion toward support for same-sex marriage has been the most dramatic, it is clear that a significant segment of the American population have reevaluated their stance on the issue. I have found no data within any of the scholarly literature or opinion research that indicates any segment of respondents have declined in their level of support for same-sex marriage. Incredibly, amongst all segments the change in attitude has been entirely positive in growth of support for same-sex marriage legality. Intracohort change captures the simple notion that people have changed their attitudes on a topic across

generational cohorts. Intracohort change scholarship and opinion date on the topic of attitudes toward same-sex marriage is compelling because it corroborates the self-evident change in attitudes over the past two decades, it isolates the generations where change has been most pronounced, and further identifies certain demographics across all generations that made change more likely.

So, why is intracohort change relevant to the larger puzzle presented in this paper that efforts to restrict gay rights, in specific same-sex marriage, may have influenced a surge in support for same-sex marriage? Intracohort change may help explain and predict which segments of an electorate or processes (like increased contact with homosexuals, education, media exposure) are most likely to serve as the catalyst from the original position, restriction of rights, to support for and assisting in the provision of same-sex marriage rights. In other words, the individuals whose minds have changed are at the epicenter of how public opinion has changed at the individual state level and at the national level; processes like contact theory, exposure to media cues, and educational attainment may all help explain why individual attitudes change, not just how they have changed amongst demographic segments. Perhaps states at the forefront of the gay rights debate, like Oregon, California, and Maine, all have populations that are largely more prone to "influence" and message frames because of demographic factors and processes at play in those states which have helped to elevate and propel the salience of the national debate about gay rights and same-sex marriage rights. Further social science research into this area would be hugely beneficial to help understand what demographic groups and processes can shape and change attitudes in other areas.

Elite Cues

The scholarly basis for the foundation of elite opinion as an influence on public opinion comes from the work of both Samuel Popkin and Anthony Downs. Popkin's *The Reasoning Voter* gives the foundational elements of how political elites influence opinion leaders, those in a society who pay close attention to civic and cultural matters and then subsequently help to shape and disseminate their views and perspectives on the ordinary less attentive citizenry who adopt them. Paul Brewer also incorporates other elements of Popkin's research, including those that come from Economics. Specifically, Downs' economic theory of democracy, which reduces people's political decision making to a series of heuristics that allow them to quickly categorize concepts, people, and cues into a simplified political world where things may seem liberal or conservative, Republican or Democratic. Popkin integrates Downs' research into his own to describe his notion of "low-information rationality" where people rely on signals and familiar message cues as reference points from people who share their view (Brewer, 2008). Today, cues abound in the media, through political parties, through candidates, advertising, and media elites where the public can find heuristics on how to define and describe their own opinions on gay rights and issues like same-sex marriage. This abundance of coverage and discussion has given rise to the salience of gay rights as a prominent issue within contemporary American public debate and greater influence of the cues provided by the media, political

elites, and high profile events like the 2013 Supreme Court rulings on the Defense of Marriage Act, California's Proposition 8, or the provision of same-sex marriage rights in Hawaii, New Jersey, and Illinois.

As of the writing of this paper, it seems nearly impossible that a person in the United States could escape the attention that has been given to the topic of same-sex marriage in the early months of 2014. Clearly, a larger degree of public debate has been spent on the topic of gay rights and same-sex marriage over the last five years than the preceding five years. An electorate's information is often mediated by elite media influences like elite opinion and high profile events that are often prone to interpretation by media elite and mediated to the public over a variety of media mediums(Brewer, 2008). The Republican Party or MSNBC may influence a potential voter in much the same way Oprah or Bill Maher may impact another potential voter and her election decision-making process. Similarly, each of those parties may interpret and frame events surrounding a high profile issue, like the firing of a high school principal at a Catholic School because of his homosexuality, in a way that shapes their followers views and influences their behavior. Furthermore, news stations, political elites, and celebrities have cultivated familiar themes in the American public debate that has impacted the saliency of gay rights and same-sex marriage. In the wake of the November 2012 ballot victories gay rights activists in Washington, Maryland, Maine, and Minnesota have fueled additional speculation about future electoral initiatives designed to authorize the provision of same-sex marriage at the ballot box in other states. Similarly, two major

Supreme Court cases were argued in March 2013 that addressed the constitutionality of California's Proposition 8 and Congress' 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. This research has benefitted significantly from increased attention given to the topic as at least nine national polls with questions on same-sex marriage have been released this year. (Silver, 2013) Media cues, elites, and events are alternative explanations behind the swift shift in public opinion. This explanation has more to do with why opinion has shifted than how public opinion has shifted.

Paul Brewer's *Value War* discusses the potential for elites and the increased visibility of gays and lesbians to explain the transformation in public opinion about homosexuality and gay civil rights policy:

> One potential explanation for the transformation in public opinion about gays, lesbians, and homosexuality lies with changes in the messages that political, social, and scientific elites put forth in public debate. During the 1990s and beyond, Americans received a different mix of messages about gays, lesbians, and homosexuality than they had in previous decades. The debate about the origins of homosexuality provides one example. A key moment this debate came in 1994, when *Science* magazine published a National Institute of Health study that endorsed a genetic explanation for homosexuality. Such a message - amplified by media coverage- could have served to undermine public beliefs that homosexuality was a choice (and a changeable one at that) while reinforcing "nature" attributions for homosexuality." (Brewer, 2008)

When we consider the trajectory of the debate about gay rights, it is useful to think about the panoply of elite discussion on a range of issues, beginning as early as the debate about the adoption of employment anti-discrimination policies to include homosexuals or the "Don't Ask Don't Tell" policy under the Clinton administration. An interesting and potentially instructive note about the potential validity of Brewer's claim is to note the

similarity in public opinion that existed before the public had been exposed to public policy debates about homosexuals. In the late 1980s, public opinion was largely united in its opposition to same-sex marriage (Sherkat, et al., 2009). Not until 1992 did the Republican party platform adopt formal opposition to same-sex marriage. Interestingly, before 1992, public opposition and hostility as documented in attitudes toward sexual relations between two adults of the same sex were consistent; between 1973 to 1988 those who described those relations as always wrong were relatively stable (Brewer, 2003). However, beginning in 1992 hostility began to decrease as measured on the GSS survey; those who responded to the question about the nature of same-sex relations as always wrong began to drop from 71% in 1992 to 54% by 1998. Simultaneously, support for gay rights policies, like service in the armed forces and protections against employment discrimination, began to increase by double digit margins (Brewer, 2003). Clearly, something served as a catalyst to make gay issues more salient to the public in the period between 1988 and 1992- and it seems plausible that because elites began to discuss and take positions on public policy related to gay rights, public opinion changed. Elite opinion may have emerged from both sides of the political spectrum, with people like Pat Buchanan drawing attention to issues like gay rights in his 1992 address to the Republican National Convention as a part of a broader culture war. An excerpt of Buchanan's speech is illustrative: "The agenda Clinton and Clinton would impose on America- abortion on demand, a litmus test for the Supreme Court, homosexual rights, discrimination against religious schools, women in combat- that's change, all right. But it is not the kind of change America wants. It is not the kind of change America needs. And it is not the kind of change we can tolerate in a nation that we still call God's country."

(Nagourney, 2012) On the other side of the debate were political elites like Bill Clinton, who in his 1992 presidential campaign pledged to overturn the ban on homosexual service in the military.

Because elites tend to mediate the public's attitude toward current events, the public, and the electorate more specifically, also approach high profile events that take place and are portrayed within the media from the lens as it is portrayed by elites who present it. As I mentioned earlier, whether a person keeps up-to-date on current events from popular programs like "The View", "Fox and Friends", or PBS' "News Hour" may each have a dramatic unique impact on how they view and interpret the greater visibility of issues concerning gay rights that occur in day-to-day news.

The heightened visibility of gays and lesbians in the media, along with the greater degree of attention paid to gay rights legislation and legal cases are another variation of what constitutes a potential explanation for the reason in dramatic shift in public opinion about homosexuals and gay rights under the larger umbrella of elite cues(Brewer, 2008). This visibility is almost always mediated by elites in a position to sculpt or frame events concerning gay rights, or more specifically same-sex marriage. How an individual processes news on the Supreme Court's 2013 decisions may be shaped dependent on whether she watches MSNBC or Fox News, or follows Sarah Palin or Perez Hilton on Twitter. Paul Brewer discusses the prospect of greater visibility and its potential impact on opinion in greater detail, particularly the proliferation of celebrities and television shows that depicted gay characters or situations:

> A third explanation for the transformation in public opinion about gays, lesbians, and homosexuality lies with the increasing visibility of gays and lesbians in mass media. Throughout most of the twentieth century, gays and lesbians were largely invisible in the media world; when they did appear, the media often presented them as deviant. Gradually, however, the media began to depict gays and lesbians more frequently, more positively, and in more diverse ways. (Brewer, 2008 p. 49)

The advent of gay and lesbian television show characters in the 1990s, like Ellen, portrayed by Ellen DeGeneres, also a lesbian, are central to the notion that as American society has become increasingly exposed and aware of gays and lesbians because of their visibility, they have become more tolerant and accepting of them. Brewer points out that the media and entertainment industry gave America movies like *Philadelphia*, the gay winner of the first season of the show *Survivor*, Richard Hatch, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy, Will and Grace,* and *Brokeback Mountain.* The increased visibility of gays and lesbians illustrate the essence of the relationship Brewer seeks to establish, one that posits that increased visibility of homosexuals in media increase support for homosexuals and gay rights policies in public opinion polls. Susceptibility to the influence of this form of media may also be mediated by cohort membership; while an 80 year old may not find *Ru Paul's Drag Race* as appealing as *Wheel of Fortune*, it is becoming increasingly difficult to escape the visibility and influence of prominent homosexuals like Rachel Maddow, Barney Frank, Robin Roberts, Anderson Cooper, Suze Orman, Neil Patrick Harris, Jason Collins, Tim Cook, or fictional depictions of homosexual characters in television and movies.

Coupled with Brewer's hypothesis about increased visibility in media is the notion that the late 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s brought an increased media attention to

major gay political, civil, health, and cultural events that centered around homosexuals. In this way, events like the AIDS and HIV crisis and the heightened risks associated with homosexual sexual behavior and the beating and murder of Matthew Shepard may have had a further humanizing impact on the way the public viewed homosexuals, evoking sympathy, particularly as these tragedies unfolded on television news programs. Obviously there was also a concurrent backlash during the advent of the AIDS crisis amongst religious conservatives who advocated the "they deserve it" position, particularly as it related to the epidemic amongst the gay population. However, when you add to the public dialogue discussion of the gay conversion movement, policies like "Don't Ask, Don't Tell", and legislative initiatives to fire gay teachers and prohibit their employment by state governments, the debate transcends a discussion of tragedy and morality to consideration of concepts like justice and fairness. In other words, scholarly articles have suggested the possibility that major events in the news concerning gays and lesbians may have produced a liberalizing effect on public opinion; some have even suggested that as a result of these events that there was a public opinion backlash (Baunach, 2011; Becker & Scheufele, 2009; Sherkat et al., 2011).

In their 2009 article, Amy Becker and Dietram Scheufele explore the impact of a number of potential independent variables on the formation of public opinion on the topic of gay marriage in an election context. In specific, their focus examined how ideological predispositions, religious traditions and values, media exposure, and political measures of tolerance and knowledge may predict support for gay marriage, specifically in an election context. Becker and Scheufele use opinion survey data collected before 2004 presidential

election, an election popularly referred to as a referendum on moral values because of the preponderance of state referenda questions defining marriage. The 2004 presidential contest also became popularly associated with a moral referendum narrative within the media because of President Bush's endorsement of a constitutional amendment that would have constitutionally defined marriage as between one man and one woman and his advocacy against the use of stem cell research.

Central to Becker and Scheufele's examination of public opinion in the context of the 2004 election are the plausible independent variables on the electorate's support for same-sex marriage. Their study begins by exploring the electoral environment in advance of the November 2004 election. The authors note the popular reference point in many of the scholarly articles on the topic of support for gay marriage and public opinion, the Supreme Judicial Court of Massachusetts in *Goodridge*. Becker and Scheufele contend that the November 2003 decision in Massachusetts garnered significant media attention and highlighted contrasts between Democratic challenger John Kerry and other socially conservative Republicans, like President Bush. Their analysis proposed to explore whether those events helped shape the context of the 2004 election and also the contours of public opinion on gay marriage. Their analysis examines the tempering influence of ideology and religiosity in approaching the context individual decisions concerning gay marriage. Scheufele and Becker contend: "...this articles privileges a more complex examination of the ways in which ideology and religiosity influence the processing of media content and shape political opinions on morally loaded, controversial issues by exploring how predispositions can contribute to or *attenuate* the impacts of individual-

level behaviors or cognitions on political attitudes." (Becker and Scheufele, 2009) Through the lens of religious and moral predispositions the authors evaluate public opinion data to determine their role in shaping opinion when exposed to various forms of media, issue frames, and varying levels of self-identified political tolerance and political knowledge. Ultimately, their research underscores some of the more universal truths that seem to control public opinion formation as measured through survey responses: religious and value predispositions are common indicators of attitudes toward social policies, like support for gay marriage. In other words, their work highlights the volume of scholarly data that discusses the controlling influence of religious and ideological preferences on opinion and on voting behavior. Further, their research propels the notion that the pre-existent ideological and religious preferences act as heuristics for the interpretation of media content. They find that the conservative ideological predisposed subjects were left largely unaffected by the influence of exposure to campaign exposure in support of gay marriage. This leads the authors to contend that as party affiliations diminish, and as people focus their media attention on sources that conform to their ideological and value-based predispositions, these ideological and religious predispositions present a greater importance for study in the quest for the source of public opinion (Becker and Scheufele, 2009). But, left unmentioned in their analysis, is the surge in media celebrities who increasingly feel comfortable and safe in coming out, like Shepard Smith, a television host at Fox News. Interestingly, Becker & Scheufele also present data that suggests that an overriding power of ideological predisposition over the potential impact of political tolerance and political knowledge. The potential moderating influence that political tolerance and awareness that the authors anticipated within the

study was attenuated by ideological predispositions; the ideological predisposition exists to a degree that it overrides the potentially positive impact political awareness would have on support for gay marriage.

Ultimately, the research by Becker and Scheufele highlights a great deal of preexistent scholarship that underscores the controlling influence of religious and ideological predispositions on attitudes toward social policy. In particular, their research undergirds the notion that "controversial moral issues like gay marriage are driven by individual ideological and religious predispositions in two distinct ways." (Becker and Scheufele, 2009) These ways are referenced in the preceding paragraphs and highlight the way these predispositions influence media interpretation and political inputs on the formation of opinion. The other way their research is distinct is in the way they find that these predispositions moderate the variables encountered in the context of electoral attitudes, with given attention to media environment in the lead-up to the 2004 election.

Literature Review Summary

In total, cohort succession, intracohort change, contact theory, and elite cues are all part and parcel to the variety of factors that scholars have discovered impact the rapid change in support for gay rights and same-sex marriage. Support or opposition to same-sex marriage is conditioned by a number of interdependent multicorrelated factors like age, degree of contact or exposure to homosexuals, and exposure to media. Some explanations, like cohort succession, are more generally accepted and disregarded as the

most prominent factors at play in changing attitudes towards gay rights. However, in many ways, my hypotheses are an extension of the alternative explanations concerning media elite exposure, contact with homosexuals, and intracohort change. After all, exposure to a campaign to amend a state constitution to define marriage as between "one man and one woman" will involve entertaining potentially new message frames concerning equality and fairness, in addition to the older themes concerning morality, traditional values, and religiosity. Similarly, these newer campaigns involve large groups of openly gay activists from within the LGBT community, some, perhaps, extending themselves into the social framework of prospective voters or survey respondents for the first time. In this context, the public debate, message frames, and elite cues delivered in the context of a statewide campaign for or against gay rights may be the catalyst for an instance of intracohort change, closing the complete loop from restriction of rights, to backlash, and then provision of rights. In Washington's successful R-74 campaign in 2012, several of the pro marriage equality campaign ads featured prominent statewide religious leaders and clergy endorsing the notion of marriage equality and fairness for LGBT Washingtonians in an ad they simply called "Faith" (Washington United for Marriage, 2012).

Ultimately, the existent academic literature is sufficient to explain the broader patterns at play in the changing opinion landscape on gay rights, but fails to explore the mediating factors at the state level where gay rights were initially restricted and have since, in some states, and at the federal level, come full-circle to advance and provide gay rights. State institutions play a role in mediating these debates, whether they are state

courts, federal courts, state legislatures, state attorneys general, or governors- yet no substantive political science work has been done in this area to examine their role in these fights. Similarly, no scholarly work has explored the potential relationship that the many statewide campaigns on gay rights have played on public opinion. My analysis carries forward the theme of the literature reviewed and aspires to show through preliminary examination of statewide electoral results, national opinion, and statewide opinion data that efforts to restrict gay rights have ultimately prodded both state and national opinion upward toward support for gay rights because of the introduction of new message frames, media coverage, elite cues, and potential contact with homosexuals.

Chapter 5: Findings

Below I will discuss the findings for each hypothesis and later discuss the variety of considerations for each specific hypothesis and consider various factors for the results across each question and their relevance toward the broader research questions.

H1: In states where issues of gay rights have appeared at the ballot box most frequently, popular support for gay rights will show a general trend of increased electoral support for initiatives meant to preserve, provide, or stop the potential restriction of gay rights in the future, in each successive referenda over time and over the previous electoral event.

As we see in tables 2, 9-11 and figures 3-5 in the Appendix, in all three states there was a 100% failure rate for Hypothesis 1. No clear linear trends emerge in the variety of state election results where gay rights questions have been before voters. I feature Tables 9-11in the Appendix for each state, California, Maine, and Oregon, with an individual representation of the referenda or ballot initiative on gay rights for each election within the respective state. I also include Figures 3-5 in the Appendix showing each individual state's support for same-sex rights, as re-configured for this analysis, across all elections. A myriad of established knowledge within the realm of political science may have predicted that discerning social trends from referenda results across wide expanses of time, particularly over the course of twenty-five years, would be a fruitless exercise. Any linear connection I hypothesized to see between the evolution of increased public debate and a simultaneous increase in support for gay rights was near non-existent. In Maine, Oregon, and California, public referenda support and opposition

to gay rights all vacillated between successive elections and the varying specific questions posed to voters. A variety of factors could account for the lack of conformity to my first hypothesis: differences in the times and types of elections when the vote was held, the distinction in questions posed to voters, and the relative contrast in state demographics to name a few. In California, for instance, three of the four referenda on gay rights were November elections; only one, Proposition 8, was on a presidential election year ballot, while Proposition 6 and Proposition 64 were on midterm November ballots. Similarly, in Maine, only two of the state's five referenda were taken during the course of presidential election years. The other three elections in Maine in 1995, 1998, and 2009 all took place on ballots where there was no federal level election. In Oregon, however, four of the five referenda on gay rights were on presidential year ballots, when election participation is generally higher.

H2: National public opinion poll data on support for same-sex marriage should increase over time as statewide ballot initiatives begin and increase in the United States; investigation of successive time periods with lesser and higher concentrations of electoral initiatives on gay civil rights will reveal sharp increases in support as forced democratic and political dialogue on the topic ensues over time.

The data from national polling firms confirm my second hypothesis. Table 12 in the Appendix shows the percentage changes for each organization over each period as divided by electoral activity on gay rights within the states and opinion trends for the entire 1996-2013 period overall. In each successive period across all polling organizations, there is increase over the previous period's lowest support levels for legal

same-sex marriage. Pew showed an average 4% increase per period from its lowest level in each successive period. Similarly, Gallup demonstrated an average 6.5% increase above the minimum level of support from the previous time period. However, the ABC News and NBC/Wall Street Journal data were too limited to glean similar data because they only began tracking opinion consistently in 2003 or later. However, the average percentage changes in support per sample across all organizations are consistently positive for each successive time period. Each polling report by period shows a positive uptick in support for legal same-sex marriage over the previous polling organization's average percentage change in each sample. For Pew, the average increase per sample between 1996-2008 (Tables 8b and 8c) is .12% per sample; For Gallup, the average increase per sample between 1996-2008 is .13% between the same period. Between 2004-2013 (Tables 8c and 8d), Pew registered an average increase between samples of .046% per sample, Gallup .727%, ABC 2.357%, and NBC/WSJ did not have sufficient data present in the 2004-2008 period to calculate an average between 2004-2013. Clearly opinion has become more supportive and thus changed nationwide on the topic of same-sex marriage. Because there were only five statewide referenda on the topic of same-sex marriage in the period between 1996-2003, the public may not have been as engaged, educated, or had reference points for the formation of their opinions on the topic of same-sex in that seven year period. However, in the final period between 2009-2013 the rate of change was the greatest across all national polling organizations featured in this study. This result would seem to infer support for my third hypothesis that in the wake of the increased public debate of the 2004-2008 period, and its 27 statewide referenda and ballot initiatives, respondents were changing their perspectives on same-

sex marriage at a rate higher than in the previous two periods perhaps as a backlash to the initial backlash that popularized placement of gay marriage rights on ballots throughout states in 2004-2008 period.

> H3: There will be an increase in the rate of change in support for legal same-sex marriage in the three states where same-sex marriage referenda have been more frequent than states where politically culture is similar but has not seen the same level of referenda incidence on same-sex marriage.

The results of my final hypothesis are inconclusive largely because of the inconsistency in data available on public opinion at the state level, particularly in states where same-sex marriage debates have not been frequent outside of national media attention and one ballot question during the initial public backlash in the period between 2004-2008. As I note in Table 13, California, Maine, and Oregon all experience positive changes in the rate of support for same-sex marriage over the final span of time measured between 2009-2013, consistent with national trends. However, when compared between states with similar political cultures using Elazar's classification model (for purposes of featuring a control group), only California demonstrates a consistently larger local rate of change per year than control group states with more than two years of opinion data available. A comprehensive depiction of the results is featured in Table 13 of the Appendix. The results largely suffered because of the dearth of statewide data publicly available in the earliest years of the period, particularly 2009 and 2010. A wealth of consistent statewide opinion data begins to emerge in 2010 and in 2011, but before then

very little consistent poll data is available outside the context of the myriad of statewide opinion data collected around the referenda on statewide constitutional bans between 1998 and 2012.

The limited number of comparable control group states also complicated the analysis. While Elazar's political culture classification model allowed a way to evaluate states with similar dispositions civically and culturally- the sheer demographic differences that exist between the states is sufficient enough to help explain why comparisons between states like California, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Washington will not be equal. Additionally, Elazar's model is old and potentially outdated because it has been in use since 1966 when he first published "American Federalism: A view from the States"- now more than 48 years ago. Current and past political events in the nation, as well as within each state, have undoubtedly shaped the contours of the most recent opinion data available there and may further indict why Elazar's model may have been a crude instrument for use in this analysis.

The final hypothesis is inconclusive because of the fluid nature of the same-sex marriage debate in the universe of states within the United States. States are handling this salient issue in a number of ways; some legislatures now seem to be taking steps to legalize same-sex marriage statutorily; others may take no action to propel the provision of same-sex marriage equality or end constitutional bans on the practive; while another group of states are leaving activists to litigate the policy in Federal courts or shift the debate toward statewide popular votes on the issue of authorizing same-sex marriage at the ballot box via ballot initiative. This dynamic, coupled with a dearth of state level

polling history, complicates a social scientific approach and ability to compare state opinion where gay rights battles have been waged more frequently against those states that are similar in their political culture but not in their familiarity with the public debate surrounding electoral referenda and initiatives concerning same-sex marriage.

The findings for hypotheses 1 and 3 are largely inconclusive; hypothesis 2 is confirmed. No clear discernible patterns or trends seem to emerge from the data examined at the statewide level. However, as the final hypothesis connects to the broader issue of my research question, statewide opinion data reveals that states that have wrestled with electoral initiatives concerning gay rights most frequently like California, Maine, and Oregon seem more likely to be closer in their public opinion toward majority support for the provision of legal same-sex marriage rather than states who have not and are similar in their political culture. Further research may reveal that states, in the aggregate, that have made multiple efforts to restrict gay rights more generally, are in a better position to support and authorize same-sex marriage in public opinion, as measured by opinion data, and vis-à-vis their state political institutions.

Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusion

The results of this analysis, while largely inconclusive, point toward the possibility that efforts to restrict gay rights have had an impact on the increasing support for same-sex marriage. Over and over again, examinations of the rate of support for same-sex marriage have shown increases in national and statewide polling data over time. My analysis demonstrates an increase in nationwide public opinion support as statewide ballot initiatives and referenda increase and generate public debate in conjunction with Hypothesis 2. Can it be sheer coincidence that the incredible increase in public support has occurred over the same period when matters of gay rights have been debated and fought so vociferously at the ballot box, in court cases, in the media, and in political campaigns? It could be. However, my three-pronged hypotheses based upon my research question leave significant room for additional debate and potential answers where more data and thorough empirical quantitative analysis are possible.

Of note within my first hypothesis was that referenda results across all states and times showed a historical tendency for gay rights to win at the ballot box when marriage was not involved as a part of the referenda question. Nine of the fourteen referenda questions were unrelated to same-sex marriage; of those nine, six were victories for gay rights proponents. In conjunction with some of the scholarly analysis described in the literature review, it is clear that the public is beginning to demonstrate their willingness to

re-evaluate their stance toward same-sex marriage as an immutable social institution, evident through their most recent affirmation of same-sex marriage rights in Maine and the three other states, Minnesota, Washington, and Maryland who also adopted same-sex marriage via ballot box in November 2012. Yes, public opinion more and more consistently demonstrates nation-wide majority support for legal same-sex marriage, but why? Can there be a definitive connection between the surge in public opinion support for same-sex marriage and the proliferation of referenda and ballot initiatives primarily oriented toward the restriction over the last 14 years?

If the data from the states where gay rights questions have been most frequently posed (California, Maine, and Oregon) is important to my general research question at all, it may be for the general level of dialogue that has been created in the wake of these ballot campaigns, the opinion dynamic these campaigns create in the present context, and any future impact they will have on the same-sex marriage landscape in these states. As of the writing of this thesis, public opinion in California has consistently demonstrated majority public support for same-sex marriage since 2010 (Public Policy Institute of California, 2013). Also relevant to this discussion is California's relatively new status as one of the thirteen states that recognize same-sex marriage per the United States Supreme Court's refusal to grant standing to the petitioners in Hollingsworth v. Perry; the Court's decision essentially paved the way for the same-sex marriage access that now exists in California.

Because Maine has already adopted same-sex marriage by ballot in 2012 only Oregon remains as one of the three states where gay rights battles at the ballot box have

been most frequent. And, again, as of the writing of this thesis, efforts are underway to push same-sex marriage on the ballot in Oregon in 2014, this time at the behest of gay rights proponents like Basic Rights Oregon and Oregon United for Marriage. ("Oregon restarts to reconsider gay marriage", 2013). It may well be possible that by the end of 2014, all of the states where gay rights have faced the ballot most often will also all offer access to same-sex marriage. Yet, even though the data and election results do not demonstrate a consistent up tick in support for gay rights referenda after previous elections have been held on gay rights, it is worthwhile to note that the states where public dialogue on the topic has been most frequent may all have legal same-sex marriage by the end of 2014.

While no clear relationship could be demonstrated between exposure to gay rights referenda and ballot initiatives and increased public support for subsequent gay rights referenda or ballot initiatives, evidence supports the notion that support for same-sex rights increased in national polls in the wake of increased statewide ballot initiatives and referenda on same-sex marriage. This may be the path of further study that becomes clear from my research; my literature review and data paint a compelling picture of what actually might be occurring if such a relationship exists, as I claim, between efforts to restrict gay rights at the ballot and the relatively recent surge in public support for gay rights nationwide. I discussed, briefly, the possibility that a version of diffusion may be occurring at the state level and prodding the nation to focus more attention on issues of inequality and discrimination where gay rights are concerned. I expect that the new norm of increased national attention toward the provision of gay rights, in particular, same-sex

marriage, will continue and play a large role in the advancement of federal litigation against state constitutional prohibitions on same-sex marriage and result in a gradual state-by-state victories for gay rights with ultimate resolution by the United States Supreme Court. I believe two things could be at play in these developments; diffusion may be occurring from the state to the national level, where states that have advanced gay rights, including same-sex marriage, have served as a catalyst for greater national media attention and dialogue on the subject more generally making it more salient nationally. In conjunction with the prospect of what I will call "state-to-nation diffusion," we could also be witness to a secondary backlash to the initial backlash that spawned efforts to restrict gay rights at the ballot box in the year 2000. This newest backlash could be in response to the new frames that have emerged and dominated more contemporary debates about same-sex marriage and gay rights; these frames, as previously discussed, have focused on issues like equality, freedom, liberty, and love and have thus shifted from the potentially more powerful past allure of a morality frame in such campaigns. Is it possible that these two phenomena, state-to-nation diffusion and a reverse backlash have mediated a recent return to gay rights debates that have centered on authorizing gay rights rather than restricting them? More research can be done to uncover the specific role those initiatives may have played in the formation of additional support as measured in poll data.

Several avenues exist for additional more intensive examination of this dynamic; the first could utilize methods of disaggregation initially developed by Erikson, Wright, and McIver (1993). The other seemingly more accurate method is multilevel regression and poststratification (MRP). According to Justin Phillips and Jeffrey Lax of Columbia

University, MRP has the ability to "combine the best features of both disaggregation and simulation techniques. It revives the old simulation method, incorporating demographic information to improve state estimation, while allowing for nondemographic differences between states" (Phillips and Lax, 2009). Estimating state public opinion from nation-wide poll samples using MRP most recently configured by Park, Gelman, and Bafumi (2006) would enable a more consistent ability to track public opinion in specific states over time than by relying on the dearth of publicly available poll data that have differing poll methodologies and sample sizes. Phillips and Lax also make clear that MRP may be superior because of its ability to produce results that are as accurate for one large national poll as it would be for ten or more.

Andrew Flores, Public Opinion Project Director at the Williams Institute at the University of California- Los Angeles School of Law was helpful to this study for his feedback on my hypotheses and research question. Flores used MRP in his comprehensive estimation of public support for same-sex marriage across each individual state. In his study with Scott Barclay, they found that 12 states and the District of Columbia at the end of 2012 "had support for same-sex marriage at or above 50%." (Flores and Barclay, 2013). Interestingly, of the 12 states that have 50% or more support for same-sex marriage, all currently perform marriages, civil unions, or domestic partnerships for same-sex couples. They also note that 13 additional states are currently within 5 percentage points of majority support for same-sex marriage and estimate that another eight states will be above 50% support by the end of 2014.

More than two decades have passed since states began to grapple with electoral initiatives concerning gay rights. Undoubtedly, over the course of this time period, public debate on the issue of gay rights, including same-sex marriage, has increased. My research question aimed to discern whether or not I could establish a clear relationship between the increase in public debate that surrounds electoral activity on gay rights and the increased rate of change in public support for gay rights and, more specifically, support for same-sex marriage. What becomes clear, both through the survey of academic literature on the reasons behind the change in attitude toward same-sex marriage, and through my own exploration of the relationship between electoral events and opinion, is that the reason for the increase in support for same-sex marriage involves a number of plausible explanations. Whether or not the forced debate of political campaigns and referenda questions on gay rights or same-sex marriage have advanced and increased support for the cause of same-sex marriage remains debatable. The data I have explored helps paint an interesting picture of state-to-nation diffusion and a reverse backlash that could be corroborated by additional qualitative and quantitative empirical analysis using the methodologies I described earlier. While I had hoped that my research question and hypotheses would pave a more concrete connection between these events, a clear path forward for additional research now exists and may better illuminate the potential for a connection between the public debate of campaigns to impact public opinion and increase support for same-sex marriage.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Below, in Table 2, an extrapolation of statewide electoral events concerning gay rights in Maine, California, and Oregon used in Hypothesis 1.

Year	Topic	Proposition #
Maine Gay Rights Referenda & Ballot Initiatives		
1998	Repeal of a nondiscrimination law based on homosexuality	1
2000	Ratification of a statute geared toward protection against discrimination because of homosexuality	6
2009	People's veto of statute passed and signed by governor granting same-sex marriage	1
2012	Allows Marriage Licenses for same-sex couples	1
	Source: Maine Secretary of State Office	
California Gay Rights Referenda & Ballot Initiatives		
Year	**Topic**	**Question #**
1978	Attempts ban on employment for homosexuals in California public educational system	6
1986	Classifies AIDS as a communcicable disease; would require registry and possible quarantine	64
2000	Defines marriage per state statute as between two persons of the opposite sex	22
2008	Constitutionally eliminates the right of same-sex couples to marriage	8
	Source: California Secretary of State Office	
Oregon Gay Rights Referenda & Ballot Initiatives		
Year	**Topic**	**Measure #**
1988	Revokes ban on discrimination imposed by governor	8
1992	Government cannot facilitate, must discourage homosexuality and other "behaviors"	9
1994	Amends constitution: government cannot approve, create protected classifications based on homosexuality	12
2000	Prohibits public school instruction encouraging, promoting, sanctioning homosexual and bisexual behavior	9
2004	Amends constitution: only marriage between one man and one woman legally recognized as marriage	36
	Source: Oregon Secretary of State Office	

Appendix B

Below in Tables 3-5, data utilized in assessment of Hypothesis 2.

Table 3 National Polling Data on Support for Legal Same-Sex Marriage

Date of poll	Sample Size	Margin of error	Support
Pew	n	MOE	% support
6/9/1996	1975	2.39	27
3/18/2001	2041	2.31	35
7/8/2003	1003	3.39	38
10/20/2003	735	3.96	30
12/2/2003	1443	2.83	30
2/16/2004	1500	2.73	30
3/21/2004	1703	2.57	32
7/18/2004	2009	2.36	32
8/10/2004	1512	2.72	29
12/15/2004	2000	2.37	32
7/17/2005	1502	2.84	36
3/12/2006	710	4.15	39
6/19/2006	1501	2.86	33
7/19/2006	2003	2.47	35
1/9/2007	2007	2.55	30
8/20/2007	3002	2.08	37
11/26/2007	1399	3.05	36
5/25/2008	1505	2.96	36
6/29/2008	2004	2.57	38
8/10/2008	2905	2.13	40
4/21/2009	1507	3.06	39
8/17/2009	2010	2.65	35
8/5/2010	3003	2.1	39
9/6/2010	3509	1.94	41
3/1/2011	1504	2.94	43
10/4/2011	2410	2.33	45
4/15/2012	1514	2.93	46
6/17/2012	2013	2.54	47
7/9/2012	2973	2.09	48
10/28/2012	2008	2.55	48
3/17/2013	1501	2.92	49
5/5/2013	1504	2.91	51

Table 4 National Polling Data on Support for Legal Same-Sex Marriage Continued

Gallup			
3/17/1996	1008	3	27
2/9/1999	1054	3	35
6/29/2003	1003	3	39
10/26/2003	884	4	35
12/16/2003	1004	3	31
2/8/2004	1008	3	36
3/11/2004	1005	3	33
5/4/2004	1000	3	42
8/25/2005	1005	3	37
5/11/2006	1002	3	39
5/11/2006	1002	3	42
5/13/2007	1003	3	46
5/11/2008	1017	3	40
5/10/2009	1015	3	40
5/6/2010	1029	4	44
5/20/2011	1018	4	53
12/18/2011	1019	3.0	48
5/6/2012	1,024	3.0	50
11/29/2012	1015	4.0	53
5/7/2013	1535	3.0	53

Table 5 National Polling Data on Support for Legal Same-Sex Marriage Continued

ABC			
9/7/2003	1028	3.0	37
1/18/2004	1036	3.0	41
2/22/2004	1028	3.0	39
3/7/2004	1202	3.0	38
8/29/2004	1207	3.0	32
8/28/2005	1007	3.0	39
6/4/2006	1001	3.0	36
4/24/2009	1072	3.0	49
2/8/2010	1004	3.5	47
3/13/2011	1005	3.5	53
7/17/2011	1023	3.5	52
3/10/2012	1008	3.5	53
5/20/2012	1004	3.5	53
3/10/2013	1001	3.5	58
NBC/WSJ			
7/1/2004	1007	+/- 3.1	32
12/1/2003	522	+/- 4.3	32
3/1/2004	1179	+/- 2.9	30
10/1/2009	1236	+/- 2.8	41
3/1/2012	824	+/- 3.4	49
12/1/2012	937	+/- 3.2	51
4/1/2013	550	+/- 4.3	53

Appendix C

Below, in Tables 6-8, statewide opinion data utilized in the evaluation of hypothesis 3.

Table 6 Statewide Opinion Data Tabulation

Date of poll	Polling Organization	State	N	Margin of error	Support %
Oregon					
Oct-04	USA Today	Oregon	811	+/- 4%	44
Jun-11	PPP	Oregon	701	+/- 3.7%	48
Jul-12	PPP	Oregon	701	+/- 3.7%	46
Apr-13	DMH Research	Oregon	500	+/-4.4%	49
Michigan					
Jan-11	Glengariff Group, Inc.	Michigan	600	+/- 4%	38.5
Aug-11	PPP	Michigan	593	+/- 4%	33
May-12	Glengariff Group, Inc.	Michigan	600	+/- 4%	44.3
Jun-12	PPP	Michigan	500	+/- 4.4	41
May-13	Glengariff Group, Inc.	Michigan	600	+/- 4%	56.8
Wisconsin					
Jun-11	PPP	Wisconsin	1636	+/-	42
Aug-11	PPP	Wisconsin	830	+/ 3.4	39
Jul-12	PPP	Wisconsin	1057	+/- 3.0	43
Feb-13	PPP	Wisconsin	1799	+/- 2.3	44
Maine					
Feb-05	Strategic Marketing Services	Maine	400	+/- 4.9	38
Nov-09	PPP	Maine	1,133	+/- 2.9	47
Oct-09	Daily Kos/Research 2000	Maine	600	+/- 4.0	48
Oct-09	Pan Atlantic SMS Group	Maine	401	+/- 4.9	53
Oct-09	PPP	Maine	1130	+/- 2.9	48
Oct-09	Pan Atlantic SMS Group	Maine	401	+/- 4.9	52
Sep-09	Democracy Corps	Maine	808	+/- 3.5	50
Sep-09	Daily Kos/Research 2000	Maine	600	+/- 4.0	46
Mar-11	PPP	Maine	1247	+/- 2.8	47
Nov-11	PPP	Maine	673	+/- 3.8	51
Mar-12	PPP	Maine	1256	+/- 2.8	54
Sep-12	PPP	Maine	804	+/- 3.5	52
Nov-12	PPP	Maine	1633	+/- 2.4	53
Jan-13	PPP	Maine	1268	+/-2.8	53
Nov-13	PPP	Maine	964	+/- 3.2	54

Table 7 Statewide Opinion Data Tabulation

Colorado					
Aug-11	PPP	Colorado	510	+/- 4.3	45
Dec-11	PPP	Colorado	793	+/- 3.5	47
Apr-12	PPP	Colorado	500	+/- 4.4	51
Apr-12	PPP	Colorado	542	+/- 4.2	53
Jun-12	PPP	Colorado	799	+/- 3.5	56*
Apr-13	PPP	Colorado	500	+/- 4.4	51
Dec-13	PPP	Colorado	928	+/- 3.2	53
		*based on support for a civil union bill passed by the state legislature			
Minnesota					
Jun-11	PPP	Minnesota	1179	+/- 2.9	47
Jan-12	PPP	Minnesota	1236	+/- 2.8	44
Sep-12	PPP	Minnesota	824	+/- 3.4	47
Oct-12	PPP	Minnesota	937	+/- 3.2	49
Oct-12	SurveyUSA	Minnesota	550	+/- 4.3	46
Oct-12	SurveyUSA	Minnesota	700	+/- 4.2	47
Jan-13	PPP	Minnesota	1065	+/- 3.0	47
May-13	PPP	Minnesota	712	+/- 3.7	49
California					
Jun-07	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2003	+/- 2	45
Aug-08	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2001	+/- 2	45
Oct-08	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2004	+/- 2	44
Mar-09	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2004	+/- 2	44
Mar-10	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2002	+/- 2	50
Sep-10	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2004	+/- 2	52
Feb-11	PPP	California	892	+/- 3.3	51
Sep-11	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2002	+/- 2	53
Feb-11	PPP	California	500	+/- 4.4	48
Mar-12	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	2001	+/- 2	52
May-12	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	1710	+/- 3.4	54
Jan-13	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	1692	+/- 3.5	53
May-13	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	1678	+/- 3.8	56
Sep-13	blic Policy Institute of Califor	California	1684	+/- 3.7	61

Table 8 Statewide Opinion Data Tabulation

Iowa					
Aug-11	PPP	Iowa	798	+/- 3.5	46
Oct-11	PPP	Iowa	749	+/- 3.6	41
May-12	PPP	Iowa	1181	+/- 2.85	44
Jul-13	PPP	Iowa	668	+/- 3.8	47
New Hampshire					
Jul-11	PPP	New Hampshire	662	+/- 3.8	51
May-12	PPP	New Hampshire	1163	+/- 2.9	57
Apr-13	PPP	New Hampshire	933	+/- 3.2	56
Washington					
May-11	PPP	Washington	1098	+/- 3.0	46
Feb-12	PPP	Washington	1264	+/- 2.76	50
Jun-12	PPP	Washington	1073	+/- 3.0	51
Nov-12	PPP	Washington	932	+/- 3.2	52
Nov-12	Strategies 360	Washington	500	+/- 4.4	54

Figure 1: Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage

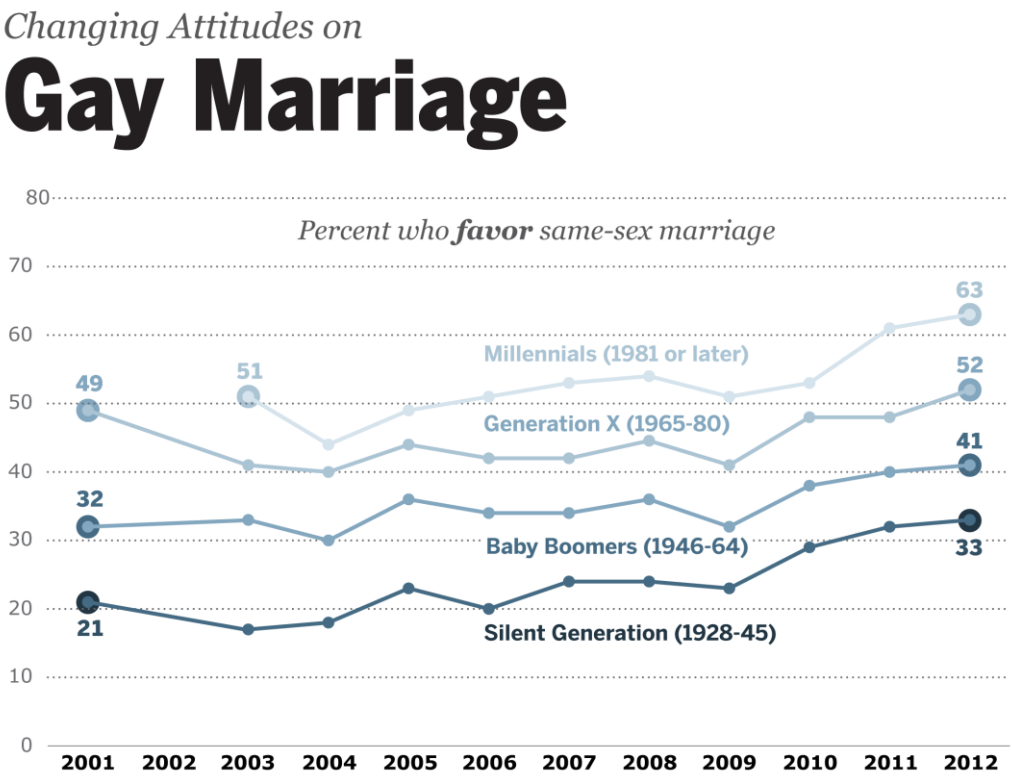

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Figure 2: Gender Differences in Attitudes on Gay Marriage

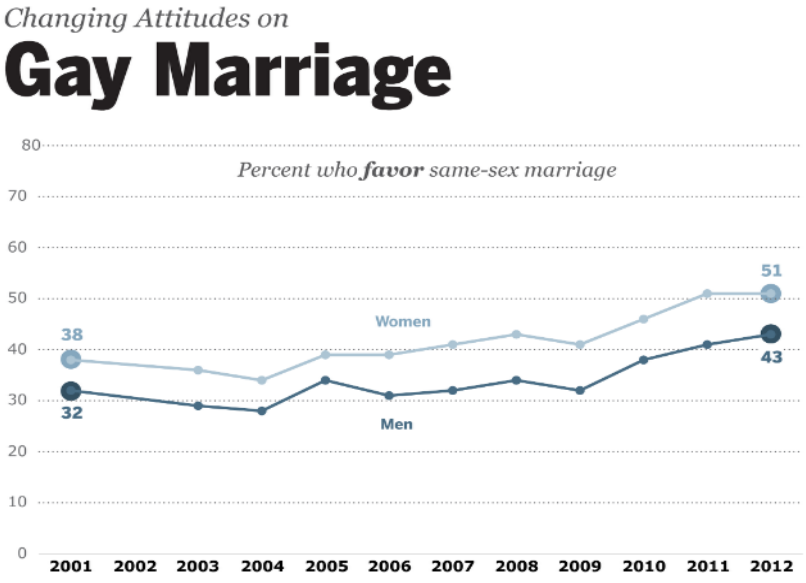

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Table 9 California Gay Rights Ballot Initiatives

California Gay Rights Ballot Initiatives

Proposition #	Topic	Year	% Support
6	*Attempts ban on employment for homosexuals in California public educational system*	1978	58.4
64	*Classifies AIDS as a communicable disease; would require registry and possible quarantine*	1986	70.7
22	*Defines marriage per state statute as between two persons of the opposite sex*	2000	38.6
8	*Constitutionally eliminates the right of same-sex couples to marriage*	2008	47.76

Source: California Secretary of State Office

Figure 3 Percentage Support for CA Gay Rights

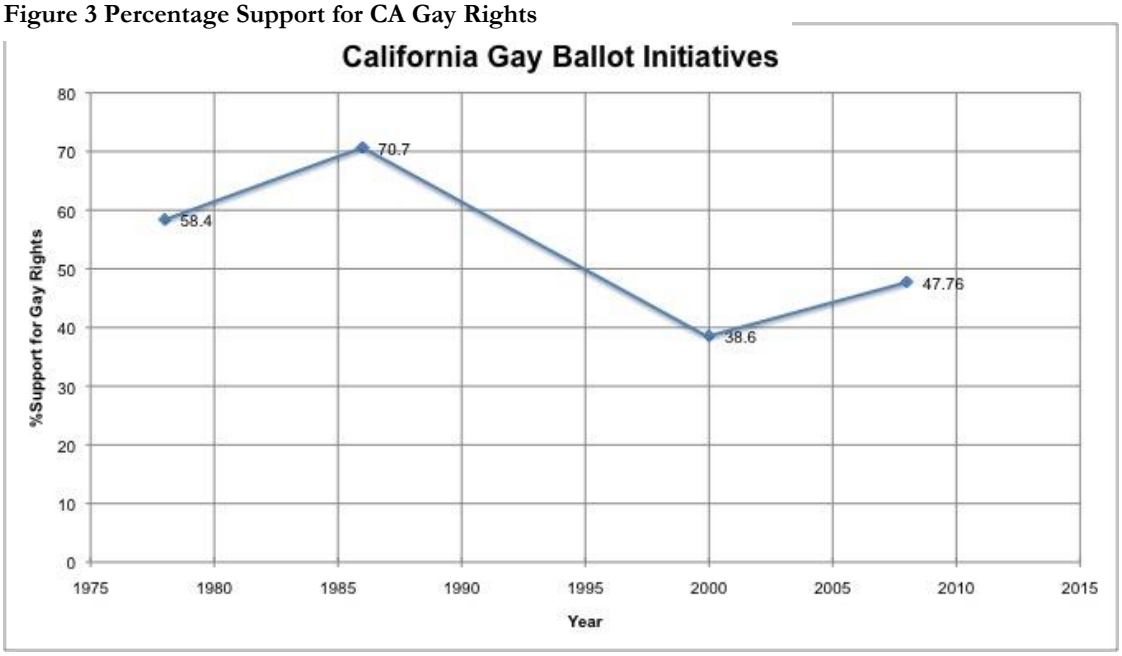

Table 10 Maine Electoral Events Involving Gay Rights

Proposition #	Topic	Year	% Support
1	*Attempts to prohibit additional categories of constitutionally protected minority classes*	1995	53.32
1	*Repeal of a nondiscrimination law based on homosexuality*	1998	48.71
6	*Ratification of a statute geared toward protection against discrimination because of homosexuality*	2000	49.62
1	*People's veto of statute passed and signed by governor granting same-sex marriage*	2009	47.1
1	*Allows Marriage Licenses for same-sex couples*	2012	52.7

Source: Maine Secretary of State Office

Figure 4 Percentage Support for Gay Rights in Maine

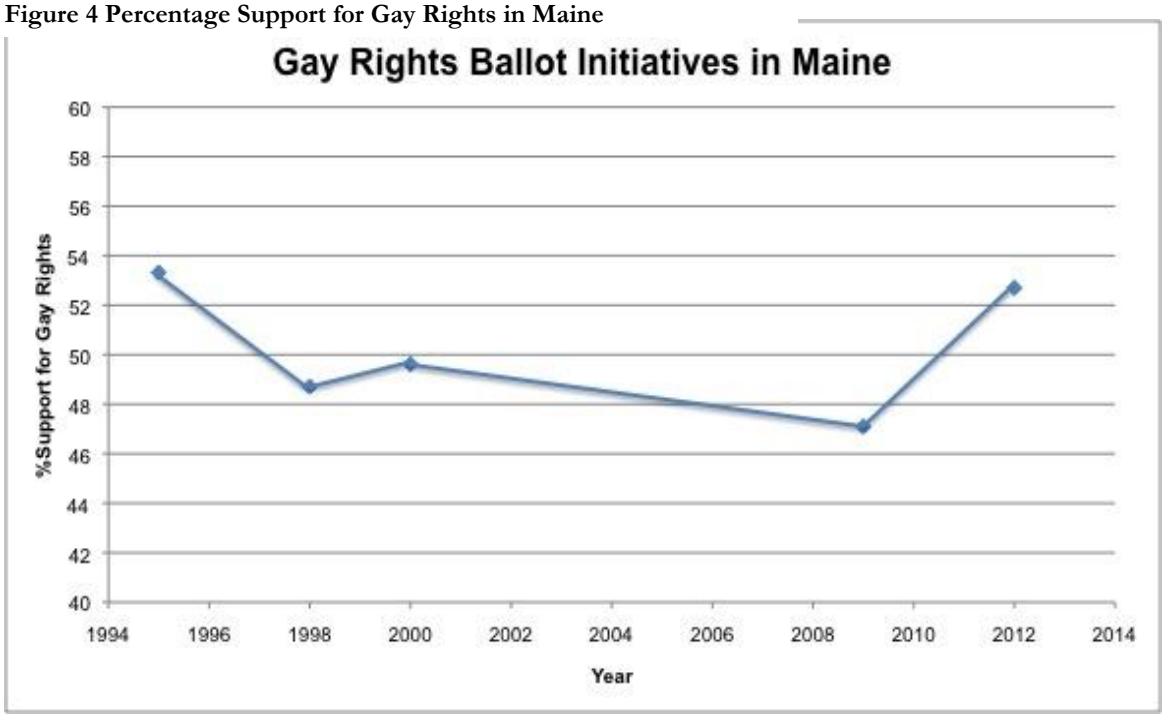

Table 11 Oregon Electoral Events Involving Gay Rights

Measure #	Topic	Year	% Support
8	*Revokes ban on discrimination imposed by governor*	1988	47.24
9	*Government cannot facilitate, must discourage homosexuality and other "behaviors"*	1992	56.47
12	*Amends constitution: government cannot approve, create protected classifications based on homosexuality*	1994	51.54
9	*Prohibits public school instruction encouraging, promoting, sanctioning homosexual and bisexual behavior*	2000	52.9
36	*Amends constitution: only marriage between one man and one woman legally recognized as marriage*	2004	43.37

Source: Oregon Secretary of State Office

Figure 5 Percentage Support for Gay Rights in Oregon

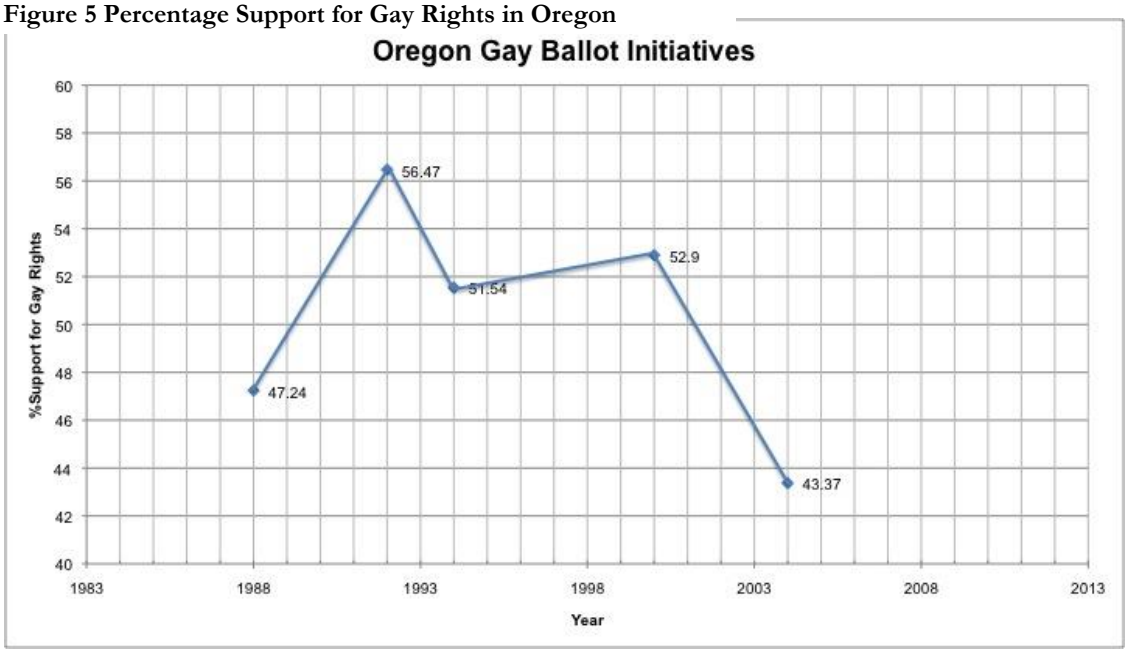

Table 12 National Attitudes in Support of Legal Same-Sex Marriage

8a National Surveys on Attitudes Toward Legal Same-Sex Marriage: 1996-2013

Organizations	*# Samples*	*Average % change between samples*	*lowest % support*	*highest % support*	*Year Range*	*Total # Referenda*
Pew	32	0.871%	27%	51%	1996-2013	39
Gallup	20	1.857%	27%	53%	1996-2013	
ABC	14	1.462%	37%	58%	2003-2013	
NBC/WSJ	7	3.500%	32%	53%	2003-2013	

8b National Surveys on Attitudes Toward Legal Same-Sex Marriage: 1996-2003

Organizations	*# Samples*	*Average % change between samples*	*lowest % support*	*highest % support*	*# state referenda/initiatives*
Pew	5	0.75%	27%	38%	5
Gallup	5	1.00%	27%	35%	
ABC	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	
NBC/WSJ	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	

8c National Surveys on Attitudes Toward Legal Same-Sex Marriage: 2004-2008

Organizations	*# Samples*	*Average % change between samples*	*lowest % support*	*highest % support*	*# state referenda/initiative*
Pew	15	0.87%	29%	40%	27
Gallup	8	1.13%	33%	46%	
ABC	6	-0.500%	32%	41%	
NBC/WSJ	1	N/A	30%	32%	

8d National Surveys on Attitudes Toward Legal Same-Sex Marriage: 2009-2013

Organizations	*# Samples*	*Average % change between samples*	*lowest % support*	*highest % support*	*# state referenda/initiative*
Pew	12	0.916%	35%	51%	7
Gallup	7	1.857%	40%	53%	
ABC	7	3.143%	47%	58%	
NBC/WSJ	4	5.750%	41%	53%	

Figure 6 Changing Attitudes on Gay Marriage by Age

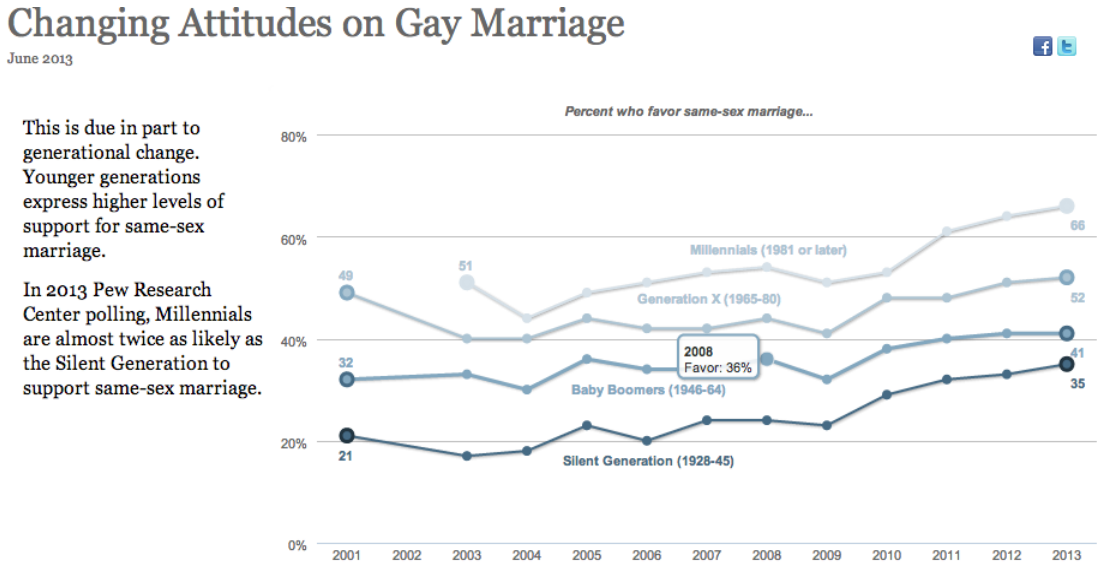

Figure 7 Hispanics Attitudes Toward Legal Same-Sex Marriage

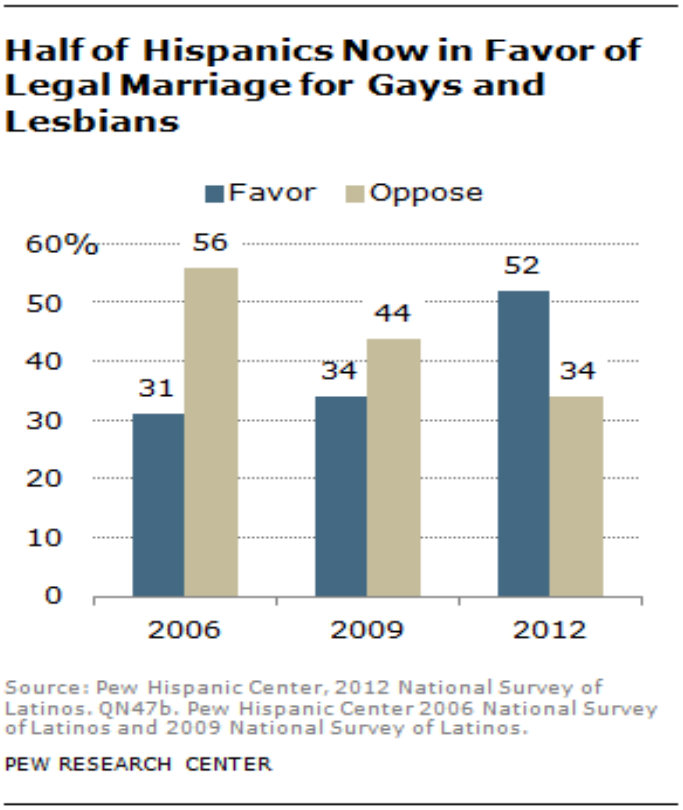

Figure 8 White/Black Gap in Support for Same-Sex Marriage

In 2001, roughly one-third of both whites and blacks expressed support for same-sex marriage. Today, 50% of whites support same-sex marriage, as do 38% of blacks.

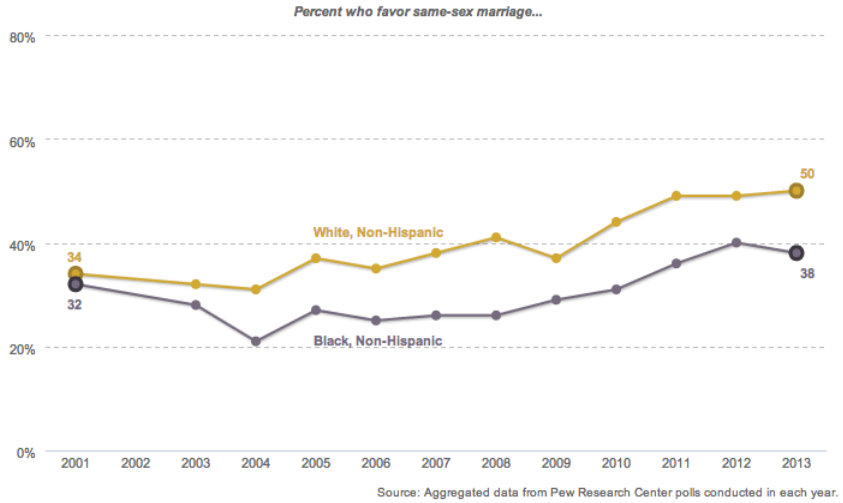

Table 13 Statewide Same-Sex Opinion Comparison Using Elazar Model

State SSM Opinion Comparisons and Control Group using Elazar's Cultural Classifications

State	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Average change % per year
California (MI)	44.0%	51%*	50.67%*	53%*	56.7%	**3.175% per year**
Iowa (MI)			43.5%*	44.0%	47.0%	1.75% per year
New Hampshire(MI)			51.0%	57.0%	56.0%	2.5% per year
Washington (MI)	-	-	46.0%	51.75*	-	5.75% between 2011-2012
Maine (M)	49.1%	-	49%*	53%*	54.0%	**1.619% between 2009-2013**
Colorado (M)			45%*	53.3%	52.0%	3.5% per year
Minnesota (M)	-	-	47.0%	46.6%*	48%*	.5% per year
Oregon (M)	-	-	48.0%	46%*	49%*	**.5% per year**
Michigan (M)	-	-	35.7%*	42.6%*	56.8%*	10.525% per year
Wisconsin (M)	-	-	40.5%*	43.0%	44.0%	1.75% per year

*denotes opinion data for the same year was averaged from multiple samples