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# American Attitudes about Gay Marriage: The Impact of Attitudes toward Familial Gender Roles and Religiosity

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AMERICAN ATTITUDES ABOUT GAY MARRIAGE:  
THE IMPACT OF ATTITUDES TOWARD  
FAMILIAL GENDER ROLES  
AND RELIGIOSITY

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
December 2011

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The purpose of this study was to examine attitudes about gay marriage. The main research question was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage? I used data from the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS) of 1,977 adults living in the United States.

Results of this study found people with traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. Also, people with strong religious affiliation and more frequent attendance at religious services have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. Furthermore, people who were very religious and belonged to specific religious affiliations have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. Conversely, this study found people who were slightly religious, not religious, and very spiritual have more positive attitudes about gay marriage and people who belonged to specific religious affiliations have more positive attitudes about gay marriage.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Although attitudes about people who are gay have become more accepting over the last two decades, gay marriage is still controversial (Brumbaugh, Sanchez, Nock, & Wright, 2008; Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006; Sherkat, William, Maddox, & de Vries; 2011). Gay marriage continues to be debated across the United States in religious and political organizations, news and media groups, human service agencies, and educational settings. Over forty states do not legally recognize gay relationships in the United States. The legalization of gay marriage is related to various factors. One such factor is the definition of family and the role of parents. Since gay marriage includes gay families and often children, attitudes toward family roles are related to attitudes about gay marriage (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Killian, 2010; McClain, 2006; Whitehead, 2010).

People who are gay and in committed relationships who desire to get married and have children should have the same right to marry as people who are heterosexual in the United States. Being gay is not a reason to disallow the right to marry. In addition, legal marriage in the United States offers over one thousand benefits to families (Killian, 2010; McClain, 2006). These marriage benefits provide security, safety, and protection for gay families. Security, safety, and protection for all families regardless of sexual orientation is an important societal value that demonstrates respect, fairness, and dignity for all people.

An understanding of attitudes toward family roles within the home helps to shed some light on how attitudes about gay marriage are shaped. Attitudes toward the gender of parents impact attitudes about gay marriage. Previous studies show people with

traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Whitehead, 2010). Traditionalists believe families should have one mother and one father, but many American families do not include one mother and one father but still have the benefits of legalized marriage such as child custody agreements and the benefits of divorce proceedings (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010, Edwards, 2007; Gerson, 2010).

In this study, I examine the relationship between attitudes about gay marriage and attitudes toward familial gender roles and speak directly to these recent studies. Recent studies show the connection between attitudes toward familial gender roles and attitudes about gay marriage. In addition, recent studies demonstrate the need for additional research on non-traditional families and attitudes about gay marriage (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Edwards, 2007; Whitehead, 2010). Additional research on non-traditional families can provide understanding about the quality of relationships among non-traditional families. Furthermore, additional research on non-traditional families, such as gay families, can demonstrate the resources families need to thrive in the United States. Legalizing gay marriage can provide some of the resources gay families may need. Gay families represent non-traditional families because gay couples are the same gender. Gay marriage represents non-traditional gender roles within families.

We can also better understand more about attitudes about gay marriage by understanding religiosity. Religiosity has a strong impact on social attitudes including attitudes toward homosexuality. Attitudes toward homosexuality influence attitudes

about gay marriage (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008; Olson et al., 2006; Pearl & Galupo, 2007; Walls, 2010). Previous research on religion and homosexuality indicate that fundamental religious affiliations condemn homosexual acts as sins against nature. Furthermore, conservative religious groups use literal interpretations of the Bible to demonize homosexuals (Fulton, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1993). Previous research on religion and homosexuality indicate that homosexuality is a choice and a behavior that can be changed with strong conviction to religious teachings (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008). Since gay couples are homosexual, people equate gay marriage with homosexuality and homosexual acts. Therefore, gay marriage is equated with demonization and sinful acts. The negative myths surrounding homosexuals are equated with gay marriage regardless of the quality of the individuals within the gay relationship. These stigmatizing myths may impact attitudes about gay marriage.

Religiosity has a strong impact on attitudes about gay marriage. Previous research indicates people who are more religious and attend religious services more often have more negative attitudes about gay marriage (Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat et al., 2011; Walls, 2010; Whitehead, 2010). There are a variety of religious practices like singing in a church choir, reading the Bible, or listening to a religious radio station. If religious organizations included positive messages about gay people in general and gay marriage in particular, negative attitudes about gay marriage can possibly change. Previous research also indicates fundamental religious affiliations oppose gay marriage, while liberal religious affiliations do not oppose gay marriage (Olson et al., 2006; Whitehead, 2010). Moderate religious affiliations are less defined in their

opposition to gay marriage. Religious affiliation appears to shape attitudes about gay marriage.

The support for gay marriage is transforming in some religious groups. For example, Episcopalians and Unitarian Universalists have shown support for gay marriage while some religious affiliations are undecided about gay marriage (Pew Forum on Religion and Family Life, 2010) The transformation of religious affiliations in support of gay marriage is encouraging for gay rights activists and advocates for gay marriage. Although conservative religious affiliations may be difficult to persuade in support of gay marriage, influencing moderate religious affiliations may deem necessary if gay rights activists are to achieve the legalization of gay marriage. If public opinion shifts in support of gay marriage, family policies and laws are more apt to support gay families, which ultimately is a respectful, fair, and dignified value for the United States.

In this study, I also examine the relationship between attitudes toward gay marriage and religiosity. In doing so, I extend the literature by offering a new insight about the different institutional and individual religious affiliations and attitudes about gay marriage. While religious institutions may publicly state their stance on gay marriage, individuals within religious institutions may have various opinions on gay marriage. In addition, I show that certain aspects of religiosity such as religious identity have a strong impact on attitudes about gay marriage. Other aspects of religiosity such as attendance at religious services and strength of religious affiliation have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage and are included in this study. Understanding the role of religiosity on attitudes about gay marriage may provide additional information and

knowledge about the formation of attitudes about gay marriage. This understanding may be useful in targeting advocacy for improving negative attitudes about gay marriage while also providing avenues for new research.

Using secondary data from the General Social Survey (GSS) of 1,977 adults living in the United States in 2006, this study examines attitudes about gay marriage and the impact of attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. The main research question for my study was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage?

The measures used in my study include an index of attitudes toward familial gender roles with three items about the role of mothers and fathers in families. In addition, I use an extensive measure of religiosity including strength of religious affiliation, attendance at religious services, religious identity, religious affiliation with two alternative measures, and a measure of fundamentalism. My findings suggest attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage.

In Chapter II, I review previous literature on attitudes about gay marriage. This chapter includes other research on attitudes toward familial gender roles and attitudes about gay marriage. I specifically discuss traditional families and non-traditional families relative to attitudes about gay marriage. I then discuss studies pertaining to gay families and gay marriage. Chapter II also includes previous literature on homosexuality and religion, religious practices, spirituality, and religious denominations related to attitudes

about gay marriage. Finally, I discuss previous literature on the sociodemographics of my study related to attitudes about gay marriage. The sociodemographics include sex, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, and highest degree earned. I present the hypotheses for my study at the end of Chapter II.

## **Chapter II: Review of Literature**

In Chapter II, I review previously published literature as it relates to the topic of my thesis, attitudes about gay marriage. The main research question for my study was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage? In order to address this research question, I review previously published literature on familial gender roles in the United States. I discuss literature on traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles. Then I focus on more liberal familial gender roles followed by current studies about gay families and gay marriage. Attitudes toward familial gender roles are related to attitudes about gay marriage because marriage includes families and children. Gay families are impacted by attitudes about gay marriage.

Next, I illustrate how religious views have impacted American opposition to gay marriage. To make evident the distinctions between conservative, moderate, and liberal religiosity, I present a historical perspective on religion and homosexuality, using this history to connect assumptions about homosexuality with attitudes about gay marriage. Further, I review literature on religious denominations and current attitudes about gay marriage. I also discuss conservative, moderate, and liberal religious views related to gay marriage and examine previous studies on religiosity and gay marriage.

Finally, I discuss previous literature on the sociodemographic predictors of attitudes about gay marriage. Specifically, I discuss gender, age, marital status, race, and educational attainment related to attitudes about gay marriage. These sociodemographic predictor variables are used in this study.



Attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity are related to attitudes about gay marriage. I contend that traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and fundamental religiosity are related to negative attitudes about gay marriage. Conversely, I contend that non-traditional attitudes about familial gender roles and liberal religiosity are related to more positive attitudes about gay. It is important to recognize and understand who holds negative attitudes about gay marriage and why they do so steps can be taken to soften and change negative attitudes.

### **Attitudes Toward Familial Gender Roles**

A variety of phrases have been used by researchers to describe familial gender roles including gender ideology, gender role attitudes, attitudes about gender, gender-related attitudes, and gender egalitarianism (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). These phrases are based on an individual's level of support for a division of paid work and family responsibilities. The concept of familial gender roles is similar to other research regarding attitudes about gender roles that measure working women and the relationship between men and women (Davis et al., 2009).

There is an abundance of research on traditional views of familial gender roles in the United States specifically emphasizing the need to keep the traditional family in place. I summarize literature on conservative or traditional attitudes about familial gender roles to show that typically traditionalists support families with one mother and one father. Below I discuss why gender conservatives have strongly opposed gay marriage. In addition, I examine research related to how conservatives have maintained

their opposition to gay marriage through the media and through emphasis on the importance of covenant marriage.

### **Traditional Familial Gender Roles**

It is important to review previous literature on traditional familial gender roles to make clear the connection to attitudes about gay marriage. Traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have a strong impact on attitudes about gay marriage. Gay marriage often includes children. This view suggests that it is biologically natural for males to protect and females to nurture their families (Edwards, 2007; Glaser, 2005; Somerville; 2007). Traditionalists argue that children need both a male father and a female mother. Ideally, traditionalists believe fathers should be the main bread winners and women should stay home and take care of family matters (Edwards, 2007; Gerson, 2010; Lubbers et al. 2009; Shiller, 2007).

Some traditionalists argue that women who choose to work outside the home contribute to social problems in the United States such as the breakdown of the family (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Edwards, 2007). Similar to working women and single-parent families, gay families and gay marriage have been blamed by conservatives as culprits in creating social problems in the United States including the breakdown of the traditional family (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Edwards, 2007). For example, traditionalists contend the increase in divorce rates results in less stability for children. In addition, gay parents are same-gendered and do not represent traditional gender roles (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Edwards, 2007). According to traditionalists, gay marriage radically changes the nature of parenthood from natural and biological to legal

and social parenthood. Gay marriage breaks the automatic link between biological and legal parenthood established by traditional marriage and has a major impact on the societal norms, symbols, and values associated with parenthood (Shiller, 2007; Somerville, 2007). Furthermore, conservatives argue that children are negatively affected by living in a same-sex family where psychological problems and gender identity disorders are viewed as inherent. As traditionalists suggest, children need both male and female role models in a family (Shiller, 2007; Somerville, 2007).

One aspect of the traditionalist or conservative view on families involves children's rights. Traditionalists are adamant that new reproductive technologies and the legalization of gay marriage pose unprecedented challenges to children's fundamental human rights (Shiller, 2007; Somerville, 2007). This involves children's rights with respect to their biological origins, their rights to knowledge of these origins, their rights to be reared within their immediate and wider biological families, and their right to have a parent of each sex (Shiller, 2007; Somerville, 2007).

Covenant marriage is a distinct kind of marriage in which the marrying heterosexual couples agree to obtain pre-marital counseling and accept more limited grounds for divorce (Baker, Nock, Sanchez, and Wright, 2009; Brumbaugh et al. 2009; Cade, 2010; Rosier & Feld, 2000). Proponents of covenant marriage emphasize the belief that marriage is more than just a mere contract between two individuals, contending that, without marriage, there would be no foundation of family in society. The covenant marriage movement works to promote and strengthen marriages, reduce the rate of divorce, lessen the number of children born out of wedlock, discourage

cohabitation, and frame marriage as an honorable and desirable institution (Baker et al., 2009).

Covenant marriage proponents believe stereotypical gender roles are needed in a marriage to strengthen the family and maintain family and societal stability (Baker et al., 2009; Brumbaugh et al. 2009; Cade, 2010; Rosier & Feld, 2000). Conservatives and traditionalists believe covenant marriage illustrates a call on the husband to be the head of the family and the wife to submit to her husband's leadership (Baker et al. 2009; Brumbaugh, et al. 2009). In addition, traditionalists contend that covenant marriage removes the stigma of gender subordination because a wife's submission is considered a service to God that incorporates emotional ethics of egalitarianism.

Traditionalists and conservatives have maintained opposition to gay marriage by taking a strong stance against gay marriage in the media. This media attention has contributed to the general public forming attitudes about gay marriage. During the 2004 election, when the issue of gay marriage was at the forefront of debate in the United States, George W. Bush, a staunch conservative President, stated that "the union of a man and a woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith" (Glaser, 2005, p. 264). Bush continued that "No alternative family arrangement has proven as enduring as the marital family structure, nor has the accumulated wisdom of several millennia of human experience discovered a superior model" (p. 264).

The Family Research Council (2009), one of the strongest and most powerful conservative special interest groups, opposes gay marriage and has purchased large

amounts of media coverage to influence the public's attitudes about gay marriage along with other powerful conservative special interest groups (Hancock, 2010; Reisman, 2011).

The Family Research Council reinforces the traditional family form by arguing that children hunger for their biological parents (Glaser, 2005), adamantly stating that children need fathers and mothers. The Family Research Council (2009) also argues that evidence on parenting by same-sex couples is inadequate suggesting that children raised by homosexuals are more likely to experience gender and sexual disorders than children in heterosexual families. They continue by saying that same-sex marriage would undercut the norm of sexual fidelity within marriage, thus separating marriage from its procreative purpose. They espouse that same-sex marriage would further diminish the expectation of paternal commitment and that marriages thrive when spouses specialize in gender-typical roles. Finally, the Family Research Council defends its views by saying that women and marriage domesticate men (Glaser, 2005).

Attitudes toward familial gender roles are related to attitudes about gay marriage because marriage includes families and children. Gay families are impacted by attitudes about gay marriage. Gay families are non-traditional.

### **Non-traditional familial gender roles.**

In this section I show that although attitudes about gay families and gay marriage are changing, there is still a conservative, moderate, and liberal divide on these issues which warrants additional research to provide understanding and knowledge about gay families and gay marriage. Gay marriage often times includes children and other family

members. I discuss literature related to gay families and gay marriage because as family dynamics change, we are seeing more social acceptance of non-traditional families. However, gay families do not have many legal rights. If attitudes can change, so can policies. Policy change is needed to provide security, protection, and safety for gay families. Without legal marriage for gay couples, their families remain vulnerable to discrimination. Discrimination can escalate to civil unrest and violence, as well as continuous challenges in court rooms.

Conservative and liberal beliefs about gay families have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage in the United States. Changes in family gender roles in the United States have challenged conservative and traditional views of family (Brumbaugh et al. 2008; Gerson, 2010). Starting in 1999 public opinion polls found 20% of adults believe that committed gay couples constitutes a family (American Enterprise Institute, 2004). In a 2002 poll, the American Enterprise Institute (2004) found that 46% of people said gay spouses should have adoption rights. A similar poll taken in 2003, found 49% thought gay couples should have the right to adopt children, while 48% percent said they should not (American Enterprise Institute, 2004). The percentages show that while attitudes have become more accepting, there is still a divide in American public opinion about gay families. This is important to know because it means more education is needed to assist with breaking the divide and coming to a resolution about gay families and gay marriage.

### **Studies on Gay Families and Gay Marriage**

Gay marriage often includes children. Gay families need the same benefits of legal marriage as other families in the United States. Research on gay families and

children can support the legalization of gay marriage by providing information on the types of relationships and the quality of life within gay families. Specifically, studies on the well-being of children from gay couples illustrate that positive psychological and behavioral adjustment is more a function of family processes and interactions, rather than a direct function of household composition such as having one father and one mother (Alderson, 2004; Avery et al., 2007; Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; Gerson, 2010; Lubbers, 2009).

For example, Chan et al. (1998) examined the relationship of family structure to the psychological adjustment of children conceived by donor insemination. Results showed that children's adjustment was unrelated to structural variables such as sexual orientation of adults or the number of parents in the household. Children's adjustment was related to family interactions and processes. An example of a family process included parents' relationship satisfaction and conflict between parents. The authors suggested that children will experience more difficulties with adjustment when parents experience high levels of stress or conflict (Chan et al, 1998).

More recently, Lubbers and colleagues (2009) found that mother's education level and attitudes toward homosexuality was related to the support or lack of support for gay marriage. Specifically, households where mothers had negative views toward homosexuality translated into negative views toward gay marriage. Mothers with less education showed less support for gay marriage.

Studies showing that women and men parent differently support the notion that having two mothers or two fathers can provide quality parenting in gay families. A

new avenue for social acceptance of gay families can be demonstrated by showing that quality parenting is not related to gender. Biblarz and Stacey (2010) argued that women and men parent differently. Many researchers agree that women and men parent differently but disagree on numerous aspects of parenting. Many scholarly researchers agree that more detailed and comprehensive studies of the variety of family types are needed (Alderson, 2004; Avery, 2007; Chan, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998).

For example, Biblarz and Stacey (2010) found that study designs with the same number of parents, the same family social status, and a different gender mix of parents had a similar impact on child adjustment with two female parents when compared with one female and one male parent. However, there is not comparable research on children parented by two men, or on other family forms such as cooperative stepfamilies, intergenerational families, or co-parenting alliances among lesbians and gay men.

Another recent study by Porche and Purvin in 2008 supporting the quality of gay relationships was conducted on gay couples in Massachusetts. Porche and Purvin found that the process and experience of raising children increased the closeness of the gay couples, enhanced the bonds of the gay couples with their families of origin, and strengthened the gay couples' community ties. The couples in Porche and Purvin's study legally married as soon as possible in 2003 when Massachusetts first legalized gay marriage in order to provide protection and legitimacy for their children. The gay couples felt legal marriage provided their children with a critical sense of security, family, and identity. A review of the literature on gay families and gay marriage



demonstrates that the quality of relationships between parents does not depend on gender. Furthermore, the review of literature also shows the need for more detailed and comprehensive research on the types of families in the United States. Research on attitudes toward familial gender roles in this study contributes to and extends the growing body of literature on attitudes about gay marriage by showing the relevance and influence of attitudes about family gender roles related to attitudes about gay marriage. The contribution and extension of literature on the importance of attitudes toward familial gender roles related to attitudes about gay marriage provides understanding and information to advocates, activists, educators, and policy makers about the need to address and target activities and resources about non-traditional family gender roles, as well as the quality of relationships within non-traditional families.

### **Religion and Homosexuality**

In this section, I review previous literature on religion and homosexuality because religious attitudes play a very important role in understanding why gay marriage is not legal in most of the United States. Religious organizations have taken a strong stance against gay marriage based on previously held beliefs about homosexuality. Attitudes toward homosexuals impact attitudes about gay marriage because some religious beliefs equate homosexuality with deviant, sinful behavior. In addition, some religious beliefs support the idea that homosexuality is a behavior that can be changed by devotion to God, prayer, and religious determination. Religion dramatically impacts social attitudes in general and attitudes about homosexuality in particular. Attitudes about

homosexuality are related to attitudes about gay marriage (Olson et al., 2006; Pearl & Galupo, 2007; Walls, 2010). Historically, religious institutions have played the role of defining romantic and sexual relationships in society (Herman, 1997; Warner, 1999). Through most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Christian churches played an important role in formulating and administering family law. A considerable part of the responsibility for public morality and the regulation of sexual relations lay with church officials because birth, marriage, divorce, remarriage and burial were the subject of canon law and ecclesiastical rites (Lienemann, 1998). This influence can still be felt today as Christians debate how much influence the legal system in the United States should have over moral issues historically defined by Catholic and Protestant churches.

Conservative, moderate, and liberal religious denominations have different views on people who are gay. Some studies on homosexuality have found that members of conservative Protestant groups hold the most anti-gay positions (Brumbaugh, et al., 2008; Finlay & Walther, 2003; Fisher, 1994; Olson et al., 2006). According to Fisher (1994), Baptist and other fundamentalist Protestants demonstrated more anti-gay prejudice than Catholics and Jews. Jews, liberal Protestants, and people who are not religiously affiliated had the most liberal attitudes about gay people because their denomination or lack of denomination does not condemn homosexual behavior (Brumbaugh, et al., 2008; Olson, et al., 2006).

Affiliating with and participating in a religious organization with members who have more negative attitudes about gay marriage may influence other members within that organization. However, individuals who participate in a religious organization

do not necessarily believe everything the organization purports. So it is possible that individual attitudes about gay marriage differ among members within religious organizations. The leaders of religious organizations representing the organization make public statements about their stance on gay marriage but may not represent every member's opinion within that organization.

Studies have demonstrated that strength of religious affiliation is related to attitudes about homosexuality. Compared to those having no religious affiliation, any religious affiliation increases the likelihood of holding negative attitudes toward homosexuals, even when individuals are affiliated with denominations with gay-tolerant teachings (Fisher et al. 1994; Herek & Capitanio, 1995; Lemelle, 2004; Walls, 2010). In other words, even though there are denominations with gay-tolerant teachings, having no religious affiliation still indicates more positive attitudes about gay people compared to having a religious affiliation of any kind.

Fundamentalist or conservative churches often profess anti-homosexual sentiments based on the belief in the authority and literal interpretations of the Bible (Emerson & Hartman, 2006; Fulton, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1993). By referring to the Book of Leviticus, conservatives proclaim homosexuality is a sin and a crime against nature. According to conservative religious teachings, homosexual acts between men are an abomination and thus sinful (Fulton, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1993).

Fundamentalists commonly espouse the edict, "Love the sinner hate the sin." While homosexual behavior or sexual activity between two people of the same gender is condemned, the celibate homosexual who refrains from same-gendered sex acts is not

condemned (Fulton, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1993). In addition, conservatives purport that homosexuality is a choice. If homosexuality is a sin and a choice, homosexuality is not genetically based or biologically determined, but rather a behavior that can be changed with strong fundamental and conservative religious beliefs and practice (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008).

Fundamentalist or conservative religiosity is important to study regarding homosexuality because conservatives equate sinful homosexual behavior with gay marriage. Beliefs about homosexuality provide understanding about what influences attitudes about gay marriage. Studies show that individuals who are most exposed to the teachings of a conservative religious tradition, with education that includes negative references about homosexuality, are less supportive of gay marriage (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008; Tygart, 2002). A person can hold the belief that the Bible is literally true on the individual level. A religious organization can teach or promote the belief that the Bible is literally true at the institutional level.

In this study, I examine the impact of the strength of religious affiliation and attendance at religious services to show how they may influence attitudes about gay marriage. In addition, I consider how religious identities impact attitudes about gay marriage to demonstrate how the two are related. Also, I measure the relationship between specific religious affiliations and attitudes about gay marriage. Some religious affiliations in my study are classified as fundamental, moderate, or liberal. These combined religiosity measures are examined to illustrate how religiosity is related to attitudes about gay marriage. This correlation can provide insight into who holds

conservative views and where these conservative views come from which can help advocates to break down negative attitudes about gay marriage.

### **Religious Practices**

I now turn to a review of previous literature on religious practices to provide understanding about what types of activities occur in religious organizations that may contribute to or influence attitudes about gay marriage. Knowing this information demonstrates what kinds of additional research may be needed, as well as what new advocacy resources may be needed to address negative attitudes about gay marriage. Providing advocacy activities that religious groups are familiar with can assist with social acceptance of gay marriage.

Fundamentalists such as Southern Baptists and members of the United Methodist church attend religious services more often than people who are moderate or liberal religiously. Religious activities include personal religious experiences and practices such as church attendance, reading the Bible, singing in a choir, beliefs about God, or how important religion is in one's life (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Olson et al., 2006; Pearl & Galupo, 2007; Tygart, 2002). Religion is important to study regarding attitudes about gay marriage. Scholars, educators, and activists can gain an awareness and understanding of how religiosity influences attitudes about gay marriage. The more researchers learn about how different aspects of religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage, the more activists and educators can work to improve attitudes about gay marriage.

Some studies found attendance at religious services, the level of strength in religious beliefs, and the degree of religious importance in one's life were related to

decreased support for gay marriage (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Olson et al., 2006; Whitehead, 2010). Brumbaugh et al. (2008) found that religiosity, measured by an 8-item Likert scale on attendance at religious services only, played a significant role in explaining opposition to gay marriage when correlates of political conservatism, attitudes toward divorce, blaming family breakdown on selfishness (which means someone who is selfish may be less committed to family), and attitudes toward covenant marriage were included as controls. My study differed from Brumbaugh et al. (2008) because I used a larger measure of religiosity including strength of religious affiliation, religious identity, and religious affiliation. Brumbaugh et al.'s study used data from a three-state survey conducted from 1998-2000 to examine attitudes about gay marriage and included control variables similar to my study with gender and educational status. However, their study included socioeconomic status, employment status, and state of residence. My study used data from a national probability sample covering the entire United States.

Most religious practices and experiences appear to have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage. Participation in more religious practices and having more religious experiences may elicit more negative attitudes about gay marriage (Olson et al., 2006; Whitehead, 2010). To define religiosity in their study, Olson et al. (2006) included formal and informal attendance at religious activities, prayer, reading religious materials, reading the Bible, and listening to or watching religious broadcasts. They found higher levels of religiosity were associated with decreased support for same-sex civil unions, gay marriage, and a federal marriage amendment that contends marriage is between one man and one woman. In a smaller study, Whitehead (2010) used religious attendance,

religious belief, and religious affiliation to examine attitudes about gay marriage and the perceived cause of homosexuality. Whitehead (2010) found that people who attended religious services more frequently were 16% less likely than those who did not attend religious services to agree with gay marriage. Whitehead's study included a measure of religious belief that included biblical literalism and images of God. In addition, Whitehead used religious affiliation with black Protestant, evangelical Protestant, mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, other religion, and no religion. An additional item asked respondents for the location and name of their church. The Evangelical Protestant group was the reference group throughout the analysis because of its propensity to be the most conservative to examine homosexuality. My study differs from Whitehead's because I use a more detailed religious affiliation measure and I classify religious affiliations as fundamental, moderate, or liberal. In addition, my study examines attitudes about gay marriage instead of the perceived cause of homosexuality (Whitehead, 2010).

Using data from the General Social Survey in 1988 and 2006, Sherkat, Williams, Maddox, and de Vries (2011) explored the trends and predictors of support for same-sex marriage. They examined 1988 and 2006 data specifically to assess religious denominational variations over time, while my study examines attitudes about gay marriage from 2006 only. I compare more detailed religious denominations to account for the differences across religious organizations. Sherkat et al. (2011) only compared mainline Protestants, Catholics, sectarian Protestants, non-denominational Christians, Catholics, Jews, other non-Christian groups, and no religious affiliation heterogeneous reference groups. My study includes Catholics as the reference group for two alternative

detailed groupings of religious affiliation.

Sherkat et al.'s (2011) study included biblical fundamentalism which is among the most important religious beliefs structuring Americans' political and social values. Biblical fundamentalism represents an institutional level of belief. They found that the gap between biblical fundamentalists and non-biblical fundamentalists is widening in regards to gay marriage. In addition, biblical fundamentalists have strongly opposed gay marriage over time. My study differs from Sherkat's (2011) measure of fundamentalism to categorize religious affiliations. I include strength of religious affiliation and religious identity in my study which is not included in the Sherkat et al. (2011) study. Other variables for comparison in Sherkat et al.'s (2011) study were cohorts, education, region, residential size, and religious factors over time. In extending Sherkat et al.'s study, I include age, education, and church attendance as a religious factor to examine attitudes about gay marriage. Sherkat et al. found church attendance had a negative impact on attitudes about gay marriage.

### **Spirituality**

Spirituality is important to investigate related to attitudes about gay marriage because people who are spiritual may have different attitudes about gay marriage than people who are religious. Spirituality may be a factor in explaining some of the divide among conservative, moderate, and liberal beliefs about gay marriage. Spirituality may have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage. Some studies show the connection between religion and spirituality (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Saucier & Skrzypinska, 2006) while other studies depict religion and spirituality as separate entities (Hill & Pargament,



2003; Simpson, Woike, & Musick, 2009; Stewart & Mezzich, 2006).

There are two classic ways to define the relationship between religion and spirituality. Firstly, religion is defined as a fixed system of ideas or ideological commitments with emphasis on communal and institutional practices and beliefs, while spirituality is a personal, subjective, and individualized experience with a variety of practices and beliefs (Hill & Pargament, 2003). Secondly, religion is a traditional form of expression focusing on the Protestantism of middle-class white cultures of western societies while spirituality is progressive and internal, appealing to the non-traditional and experiential seekers of truth and meaning (Saucier & Skrzypinska, 2006).

Some scholars on the topic of religion and spirituality argue that the concept of religiousness and spirituality are not independent of each other (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Simpson, et al., 2009). According to this thinking, religion and spirituality are related and have shared elements. Spirituality is defined as multidimensional, encompassing beliefs concerning reality beyond the sensory and material world (Hill & Pargament, 2003; Simpson et al., 2009). The nature and number of dimensions within spirituality is debated, but religiosity is usually considered part of the spiritual dimensions. Spirituality is generally defined as an individual set of beliefs and practices that may or may not include religion, whereas religious practices are generally considered a part of spirituality (Stewart & Mezzich, 2006). Spirituality is an important aspect to study on attitudes about gay marriage because research is not available, to my knowledge, and may shed light on another piece of the puzzle related to attitudes about gay marriage. Some people may be spiritual but not religious. Some people may consider spirituality an integral part of

religion but beliefs about gay marriage may differ across spirituality and religion.

Spirituality is a new factor in the discussion about gay marriage. Spirituality may assist with explaining some of the divide amongst conservative, moderate, and liberal views on gay marriage.

### **Religious Denominations and Gay Marriage**

Conservative, moderate, and liberal religious denominations have multiple positions on gay marriage (Olson, et al., 2006). Some religions support gay marriage, while other religions have remained neutral on the issue. Still other religions explicitly oppose gay marriage (Olson, et al.). Religious denominations vary greatly on their attitudes about gay marriage.

Based on 35,000 adults in the United States, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2010) examined the positions of various religious denominations on homosexuality and/or gay marriage. The majority of American Baptist Churches in the United States think homosexuality is not compatible with Christian teachings, while some American Baptist churches have welcomed openly gay members. Southern Baptists do not support gay marriage. Southern Baptists believe they should demonstrate love for those practicing homosexuality by the forgiving and transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Pew Forum).

In 2009, the Episcopal Church endorsed gay marriage and supported non-discrimination policies for gay and lesbian people. Episcopal churches were one of the first large religious denominations to publicly support gay marriage in the media (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010). Between 2006 and 2009, however, the

Episcopal Church has been historically divided on the issue of gay marriage which played out in a highly publicized controversy that involved numerous conservative Episcopalian Churches leaving the national church based on different interpretations of scripture.

Evangelical Lutheran Churches in America discussed the support for gay marriage and the ordination of openly gay ministers in 2009. However, local task forces within Evangelical Lutheran Churches have fought against gay marriage. The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod takes the position that gay marriage is against their creator (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010).

According to the Pew Forum (2010), the Presbyterian Church in America has not taken a clear stance on gay marriage, but discussed issues concerning homosexuality in the church at their General Assembly in 2008. As recently as July 2010, the Presbyterian Church (USA) voted against gay marriage but local pastoral governing committees in states like Minnesota voted to define marriage as between two people instead of between a man and a woman (Smith, 2010). In 2004, the United Methodist Church in America reaffirmed their official position that marriage is between one man and one woman. In 2006, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops opposed gay marriage, but argued that the Catholic Church condemned violence and bigotry against gay and lesbian people (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010).

Fundamentalist Mormons (Church of Latter Day Saints) argue that marriage is between one man and one woman. However, moderate Mormons within the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints do not take a stance on gay marriage (Pew Forum on

Religion and Public Life, 2010). In this study, I examine Mormons in a detailed category separate from other religious denominations related to attitudes about gay marriage.

The Islamic Shura Council representing Muslim groups in Southern California denounce gay marriage, but condemn all forms of discrimination (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010). In contrast, the Reform and Deconstructionist movements within Judaism support gay rights including gay marriage. The Jewish Conservative movement does not support gay marriage but grants autonomy to rabbis in choosing whether to perform gay marriage ceremonies or not. Orthodox Judaism is strictly against gay marriage (Pew Forum).

Attitudes about gay marriage vary based on differences between institutional macro-level systems and individual micro-level beliefs. People within institutions may have different beliefs about gay marriage while the public stance taken by the religious institution as a whole represents the leadership's majority position. My study examines different religious denominations to explain individuals' attitudes about gay marriage.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2010) reveals that religious affiliations are transforming their attitudes on gay marriage. Studying different religious denominations on gay marriage may have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage. My study compares more detailed religious affiliations to account for the differences across religious institutions. For example, my study compares attitudes about gay marriage among various kinds of Baptists like Southern Baptists and members of the American Baptist Association versus all Baptists lumped into one large institutional category. I can compare specific religious affiliations within a larger institutional affiliation. Among

those publicly supporting gay marriage are Unitarian Universalists who passed a resolution in support of gay marriage in 1996 (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010). Buddhists and Hindus have called for tolerance and recognition of differing cultural attitudes toward gay and lesbian people. In 2005, the United Church of Christ recognized and advocated for gay marriage (Pew Forum).

In summary, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life (2010) survey found that attitudes about gay marriage relative to religious denomination was mixed, complex, and drawn along lines of conservative, moderate, and liberal views. The Episcopal Church, the Unitarian Universalists, and the United Church of Christ are the most liberal and supportive of gay and lesbian people including their right to marry. Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the Deconstructionist and Reform Jewish churches also support gay marriage (Pew Forum). Moderate Mormons and the Presbyterian Church in America do not take a stance on gay marriage. Buddhists and Hindus call for tolerance and understanding toward gay people.

Baptist Churches in the United States, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Orthodox Jews, the United Methodist Church, Southern Baptists, the Lutheran Missouri Synod, fundamentalist Mormons, and the Islamic Shura Council representing Muslim groups in Southern California formally oppose gay marriage (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010).

Since religious denominations are divided on the issue of gay marriage and show mixed and complex views regarding gay marriage, sociology researchers and religious scholars use religious classifications based on a continuum of conservative, moderate,

and liberal morality rather than denominations to study social issues. A pattern has emerged differentiating religious denominations along lines of morally conservative and morally liberal (Mead, Hill, & Atwood, 2005; Walls, 2010; Yamane, 2007). In this study, I examine religious denominations classified as fundamental, moderate, and liberal. This information contributes to and extends the body of literature related to fundamental, moderate, and liberal religious views and attitudes about gay marriage by providing attitudes about gay marriage from detailed and specific religious affiliations and larger institutional affiliations.

Jewish people tend to have the most liberal moral attitudes on social issues such as gay marriage followed by liberal Protestants (Burdette, Hill, & Moulton, 2005). Evangelical Protestants have the most conservative attitudes on morality followed by Catholics. Agnostics or atheists who have no religious affiliation consistently express the most liberal attitudes toward morality issues such as gay marriage, abortion rights, cohabitation, and equal rights for women (Burdette et al.).

Whitehead (2010) found that evangelical Protestants were the most conservative with no support for gay marriage while mainline Protestants, Catholics, and other religions were the most supportive (Whitehead, 2010). Olson et al. (2006) found that being a member of any religious tradition other than evangelical Protestant or mainline Protestant increased support for gay marriage. Olson et al., also in this study, found Jewish people were substantially less likely than any other religious group to oppose gay marriage. Secular people without any religious affiliation were more likely to support gay marriage than non-secular people (Olson et al.).

In another Western, predominantly Christian country, some important similarities and differences in regards to positions on gay marriage were apparent. In the Netherlands, where gay marriage is legal, conservative religion was negatively related to attitudes about gay marriage (Lubbers et al., 2009). In a research study conducted in 2003, two years after the legalization of gay marriage in the Netherlands, data showed the strongest determinant of attitudes about gay marriage was socialization within religious institutions. Neighborhoods with higher numbers of Protestants were less supportive of gay marriage compared to neighborhoods with a lower population of Protestants. Religious school attendance did not impact attitudes about gay marriage which surprised Lubbers and his colleagues (Lubbers et al.).

Lubbers et al. (2009) found that the majority of the Dutch population supported gay marriage but large differences were evident between religious and non-religious groups. The Dutch Reform, or liberalists, did not want gay marriage abolished in the Netherlands. Lubbers et al. found that other Christian faiths favored abolishing gay marriage. Catholics had a more favorable view of gay marriage than Protestants (Lubbers et al.).

The fact that religion influences attitudes about gay marriage in a country outside the United States where gay marriage is legal reinforces the importance of continuing to study the dynamics of religion and attitudes about gay marriage in the United States. Researchers still have more to learn about religion and attitudes about gay marriage. Fundamental religions appear to negatively impact attitudes about gay marriage while liberal religions often are supportive of gay marriage.

Religiosity is important to study because of the strong influence religiosity has on people within religious affiliations and the formation of attitudes about gay marriage. My study contributes to and extends the literature on religion and attitudes about gay marriage because I provide an extensive comparison of individual religious affiliations to larger institutional affiliations. My study has additional religious measures including strength of religious affiliation, attendance at religious services, religious identity, and a measure of fundamentalism that categorizes religious affiliations. These religious factors have not been studied together related to attitudes about gay marriage. The findings from my study can inform and provide insight for educators, activists, advocates, and policy makers to assist with changing negative attitudes about gay marriage.

### **Sociodemographics**

One final factor important to understanding attitudes about gay marriage is demographics. Demographics are common factors among all people that may influence attitudes about gay marriage like sex, age, marital status, and education level.

Studies have routinely found that women, younger adults, never married adults, white adults, and more educated adults have more positive attitudes about gay marriage (Bowman & O'Keefe, 2004; Brumbaugh, et al., 2009; Pearl & Galupo, 2007; Sherkat, Williams, Maddox, & de Vries, 2011). Bowman and O'Keefe (2004) found in their research of small and large surveys in the United States on attitudes about gay marriage that women, younger adults, white adults, and more educated adults have more positive attitudes about gay marriage. Bowman & O'Keefe's (2004) research did not include marital status. Brumbaugh et al.'s (2009) study examined attitudes toward gay marriage



within the context of concern over the weakening of heterosexual marriage. The study was designed to explore attitudes toward marriage and divorce reform and found that women, Whites, and younger persons were more approving of gay marriage than men, Blacks, and older persons (Brumbaugh et al.). The sociodemographic characteristics used in my study include sex, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment. Based on previous research, I expect similar findings with these control variables.

### **Hypotheses**

The purpose of this study is to examine attitudes about gay marriage based on attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. Traditional social attitudes appear to negatively impact attitudes about gay marriage, while liberal views tend to be more supportive of gay marriage.

My study will contribute to the growing body of research on attitudes about gay marriage by examining attitudes toward familial gender roles. Attitudes toward familial gender roles have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage. Understanding who and why traditional and non-traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have an impact on gay marriage can help social acceptance of gay marriage. Another important aspect to inform the public regarding gay marriage is the fact that marriage often includes children who may be subject to discrimination because gay families are not protected by the legal benefits of marriage. In addition, attitudes toward traditional versus non-traditional familial gender roles are transforming because there are a variety of non-traditional families in the United States.

My study will also contribute to the growing body of research on attitudes about gay marriage by examining extensive measures of religiosity not included in the current literature on attitudes about gay marriage. My study examines strength of religious affiliation, frequency of attendance at religious services, religious identity, spiritual identity, detailed religious affiliations versus larger religious affiliations, and a fundamental, moderate, or liberal measure to categorize religious affiliations. To my knowledge, attitudes toward familial gender roles and the role of religiosity have not been studied together to explain attitudes about gay marriage in the United States. Understanding the differences between traditional and non-traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles, as well as conservative and liberal religious views related to attitudes about gay marriage can shed light on who holds negative and positive attitudes about gay marriage and why attitudes

As discussed earlier in this chapter, previous research has found that fundamental religious groups have higher levels of attendance at religious services, stronger affiliation with religion, and are more religious compared to liberal groups. My review of the literature indicates that spirituality has not been adequately researched regarding attitudes about gay marriage. My research may shed light on the influence of spirituality related to attitudes about gay marriage. Religiosity, as extensively defined here in my research, has not been studied as fully with regard to attitudes about gay marriage in America. The main research question for my study was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage?

In Chapter 3, I discuss the data, measures and methods I use in this research.

Overall, I am interested in learning how traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage.

I propose the following hypotheses:

All hypothesized relationships will be tested controlling sex, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, and highest degree earned. Controlling these variables reduces the risk of spuriousness.

Hypothesis 1: People with more traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Hypothesis 2: People with stronger religious affiliation have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Hypothesis 3: People who attend religious services more often have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Hypothesis 4: People who are more religious have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Hypothesis 5: People who are less spiritual have more positive attitudes about gay marriage.

Hypothesis 6: Specific religious affiliations are related to attitudes about gay marriage.

Fundamental and liberal religious affiliations impact attitudes about gay marriage. In the following chapter, I discuss specific detailed religious affiliations and larger religious affiliations with fundamental, moderate, and liberal identities.

Hypothesis 7: People with fundamental religious affiliations have more negative attitudes about gay marriage

In this chapter I have discussed a wide range of literature related to attitudes about gay marriage. I discussed attitudes toward familial gender roles and various studies on religiosity related to attitudes about gay marriage. I illustrated how my study is similar to and different from other studies on gay marriage. In the following chapter I discuss the research design and methods I use to assess my hypotheses. Then, I present the analytic plan to end Chapter III.

### **Chapter III: Methods**

To examine relationships between attitudes toward familial gender roles, religiosity, and attitudes about gay marriage, I used the General Social Survey (GSS) to test my hypotheses predicting attitudes about gay marriage, as stated at the end of Chapter II. The main research question for this study was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage? This chapter begins with an explanation of the GSS data. Then, I examine the construction of the main dependent variable, attitudes about gay marriage. Next, I examine all independent or predictor variables, and the control variables for this study. This chapter concludes with the analytic plan.

#### **Data**

The GSS is a national probability sample based on personal interviews designed to monitor social characteristics and attitudes on numerous topics, including gay marriage. The GSS is administered every two years by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago and funded by the National Science Foundation. NORC's procedures protect human subjects; their public data contain no information that can identify individual respondents. I analyze publicly-available data from the 2006 GSS, available via download at <http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/GSS+Website>.

The target population of the 2006 GSS was adults 18 years and older living in households in the United States. The GSS used computer assisted personal interviews in English and Spanish. However, Spanish-speaking persons were not included in my study

because the section of the survey module for Spanish-speaking persons did not include questions about gay marriage (Davis, et al., 2009). The response rate for the GSS in 2006 was 71%. This response rate was better than the response rates of the Gallup organization and a Greenberg, Quinlan, and Rosner survey on gay marriage conducted between 2000-2004 (Sherkat, et al., 2011). In addition, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life had a response rate of 24% which is less than the 71% of the 2006 GSS.

In 2006, the GSS used alternative ballots with two samples. Sample A had ballots 1, 2, and 3, while sample B had ballots 4, 5, and 6 (Davis, et al., 2009). All questions on attitudes about gay marriage appeared on ballots 1, 3, 4, and 6. While the full 2006 GSS includes 4,510 respondents, only 1,982 answered the question on gay marriage. In my analyses, data were deleted listwise to handle missing values for age and marital status yielding 1,977 respondents.

The next section explains the measures used in this study including attitudes about gay marriage, attitudes toward familial gender roles, religiosity, and the control variables. The chapter concludes with information about how the data were analyzed.

## **Measures**

### **Attitudes about gay marriage.**

The main research question for my study was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage? The dependent variable for this study was agreement with the statement, “Homosexuals should have the right to marry.” This is an ordinal measurement using a five-item Likert scale of strongly agree = 5, agree = 4,

neither agree nor disagree = 3, disagree = 2, or strongly disagree = 1. Higher scores indicate more agreement or more liberal views of gay marriage. In my analyses, I treat the attitudes about gay marriage as interval.

### **Attitudes toward familial gender roles.**

In order to measure respondents' attitudes toward familial gender roles, I created an original index that combined three statements. The index has an ordinal level of measurement and include: "A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work," "A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works," and "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family." Responses to each were a four-item Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. I coded responses to these three items so that lower scores indicated more liberal attitudes toward familial gender roles and higher scores indicated more traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles. To account for partially missing components in some instances, the index was evaluated using the mean of scores across the three component statements.

Individually, these statements have been used in previous research on gender role attitudes (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). However, the statements have not been used together to examine attitudes about gay marriage. The three statements in the gender index of attitudes toward familial gender roles are based on the concept of an individual's level of support for a division of paid work and family responsibilities (Davis & Greenstein, 2009). These statements basically represent the beliefs about relationships

between women and men in the context of work and family life. Other studies on attitudes toward familial gender role measurement may use different words to describe attitudes toward familial gender roles like gender ideology, gender attitudes, gender egalitarianism or beliefs about gender (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Hochschild, 1997; Kiecolt, 2003). However, the basic premise is the expected roles that women and men perform in married and procreative heterosexual relationships (2009).

The familial gender role index has good reliability (Cronbach's Alpha .710). Since the statements in the gender index appeared on ballots 1 and 4, only the measure is available for a random 50% sub-sample. Mean substitution was used to impute a value for the missing cases. The variable with imputed missing values and the missing flag variable were then included in the regression analyses.

### **Religiosity.**

I used a series of variables to measure religiosity, including: strength of religious affiliation, frequency of attendance at religious services, identification as a religious and spiritual person, and religious affiliation. In addition, I used a measure in my study to classify religious denominations as fundamental, moderate, or liberal. The next section explains the operational definitions of religiosity.

### **Strength of religious affiliation.**

To measure strength of religious affiliation, respondents were asked, "Would you call yourself a strong or not very strong (religious preference name inserted)?" Respondents could answer this question with the following closed-ended responses



“strong”, “somewhat strong”, and “not very strong.” I created dummy variables for each response and a missing flag, with “not very strong” as the reference group.

#### **Attendance at religious services.**

A behavioral measure of the frequency of respondents’ attendance at religious services was included with the question, “How often do you attend religious services”? Responses were dummy coded: “never” (reference group), “less than once per year,” “about once or twice per year,” “several times a year”, “about once a month,” “2-3 times a month,” “nearly every week,” “every week,” and, “more than once a week,” with a missing flag.

#### **Religious identity.**

Religious identity includes two measures with similar coding, religious person and spiritual person. For religious person, respondents were asked, “Do you consider yourself a religious person”? Close-ended responses included, “very religious,” “moderately religious,” “slightly religious,” or, “not religious.” For spiritual person, respondents were asked, “Do you consider yourself a spiritual person”? Responses included “very spiritual,” “moderately spiritual,” “slightly spiritual,” or “not spiritual.” Both were dummy coded, with “moderately” as the reference group, and include a flag for missing.

#### **Religious affiliation.**

Religious affiliation is an independent variable obtained by asking respondents “What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion”? Respondents were asked follow-up questions depending on their answer

to clarify their specific religious preference. Respondents who answered, “Some other religion,” were probed with, “Please specify your religion and/or church.” Those identifying as Protestant were asked, “...what specific denomination is that, if any?” Respondents identifying as Jewish were asked, “Do you consider yourself Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, or none of these?”

I combined these religious preference questions into two alternative variables: a more detailed version called Individual Denominations (Option 1) and a less detailed version called Combined Denominations (Option 2). I created two alternative variables to examine individual specific religious denominations versus examining the larger denominational institutions. For example, I could examine American Baptist Churches in the USA versus Other Baptists or examine the United Presbyterian Church versus Other Presbyterians, Orthodox and Conservative Jews versus Reform Jews using my Individual Denominations measure. In the alternative Combined Denominations, I grouped religious affiliations into larger institutions. For example, I could examine all Baptists versus all Presbyterians versus all Jews. In addition, when I use the alternative Combined Denominations, I also include a measure of fundamentalism, which is described in detail below. Table 1 illustrates the two alternative variables for religious affiliation. Catholic was the reference group for both.

#### **Individual denominations (option1).**

The Individual Denominations (Option 1) variable provides detailed measures of specific religious affiliations. This is a unique measure because no study has used this much detail of specific religious affiliation with attitudes about gay marriage. This

allowed me to examine individual denominational views of attitudes about gay marriage that may differ across denomination or differ from larger institutions. For example, members of the American Baptist Churches in the USA may have different views of gay marriage than Other Baptists or different from United Presbyterians or from Reform Jews. Individual Denominations were coded as dummy variables. If respondents answered “other Protestant,” the GSS Codebook referred me to Appendix K that included a list of 186 smaller Protestant denominations that were used in previous GSS research since 1984. Fifty of the 186 smaller Protestant denominations were identified by about 200 of the 2006 GSS respondents. With that detail, I could identify respondents as Pentecostal, Mormon, or members of the Church of Christ.

Other affiliations identified by respondents were too infrequent in the sample to be distinguished analytically and are included among the ‘other’ categories (Other Baptists, Other Methodists, Other Lutherans, Other Presbyterians, non-denominational Protestants, and Other Protestants).

Table 1

*Religious Affiliation, Individual Denominations, and Combined Denominations*

Option 1 <u>Individual Denominations</u>	Option 2 <u>Combined Denominations</u>
Catholic Protestant Baptist American Baptist Association Southern Baptist Convention American Baptist Churches in the USA National Baptist Convention of America and National Baptist Convention in the USA Other Baptists Methodist African Methodist Episcopal Church and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church United Methodist Church Other Methodists Lutheran American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church in America Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church of America Other Lutherans Presbyterian United Presbyterian Church Presbyterian Church in the United States, Presbyterian Church (USA), and Other Presbyterians Episcopal Church Church of Christ Mormon Pentecostal Protestant non- denominational Other Protestants Christian and Orthodox Christian Non-Protestant Interdenominational Other non-Protestants Jewish Orthodox and Conservative Reform and Other Jew Buddhist, Hindu, Other Eastern Muslim, Islam None, no religion	Catholic Protestant Baptists Methodists Lutherans Presbyterians Episcopal Other Protestants Other non-Protestants Jewish Buddhist, Hindu, Other eastern Muslim, Islam None, no religion

### **Combined denominations (option 2).**

The second version of religious affiliation I used is based on Combined Denominations (Option 2), which collapses denominations together into larger groupings. This is a unique measure because these groupings have not been used before with attitudes about gay marriage. Each category was dichotomized with dummy variables coded 1 and 0 with Catholics as the reference group. Notable differences between the detailed (Option 1) and the combined (Option 2) affiliation measures are that in Option 2 all Jewish respondents are grouped together, as are all Baptists, all Methodists, all Lutherans, all Presbyterians, all Other Protestants, and all other non-Protestants.

### **Fundamentalism.**

A measure of fundamentalism is included to elaborate upon religious affiliations. Religious affiliations have been classified as fundamental, moderate, and liberal by NORC researchers (Smith, 1986). They classified specific Protestant denominations on this scale, even those that I am unable to identify separately in my two religious affiliation variables. Fundamentalism is a more conservative view of religious affiliation whose tenets are based on the literal interpretations of the bible. Fundamentalism is coded into dummy variables. A missing flag was created to handle missing values. The reference group was moderate.

### **Control variables.**

Statistical controls were used to rule out potential sources of spuriousness. Sources of spuriousness can be factors other than the independent variables responsible for variation in the dependent variable. In other words, an uncontrolled factor may

account for variation between the independent and the dependent variables. The consequences of spuriousness may be the detection of a relationship that may not be a true, causal relationship.

Missing data were examined for each control variable discussed below. The cases missing for age and marital status were deleted listwise from the analytical sample. As no additional cases had missing values on the other control variables, no missing data flags were required for any control variable.

Sex is a dummy variable for women with men as the reference. Age is measured in years. Marital status includes married (reference group), widowed, never married, and separated/divorced and is dummy-coded. Race/ethnicity is represented by dummy variables for four groups: non-Hispanic white (reference group), non-Hispanic black, non-Hispanic other, and Hispanic. The highest degree earned, a measure of educational attainment, includes dummy variables for: less than high school, high school completion (reference group), junior college, bachelor's degree, and graduate degree.

### **Analytic Plan**

To assess the relationship between attitudes about gay marriage, attitudes toward familial gender roles, and religiosity, I analyzed the 2006 GSS data using SPSS 19.0 software. First, I generated frequency distributions and descriptive statistics to examine the distributions of all the variables in my analysis. Means, standard deviations and proportions are shown in Chapter IV, Table 2, except that in Table 2 I treat my outcome as an interval-like ordinal variable. I used bivariate ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression to detect whether the independent variables were related to my outcome,

attitudes about gay marriage.

Next, I fit a series of multivariate OLS linear regression to test my hypotheses. The multivariate analyses allow me to statistically control potential sources of spuriousness. In linear regression, nested models were run by entering the independent variables in block format. I compared nested models using comparison F-statistics.

Regression diagnostics were run on my two most complete regression models. I looked for issues with multi-collinearity among the variables. In addition, I looked for violations of the assumptions of linear regression that may interfere with accurately identifying relationships between variables. Specifically, I examined residual plots (the standardized residual by the standardized predicted value) and partial plots of the independent variables.

In OLS linear regression the dependent variable, all the control variables were first and are included in all models. This allowed me to examine attitudes about gay marriage with each set of predictor variables while controlling other sources for spuriousness. The models used in my study are unique and included: Model 1 Controls; Model 2 Controls and Attitudes toward Familial Gender Roles; Model 3 Controls and Religiosity with Individual Denominations; Model 4 Complete Model with Controls, Attitudes toward Familial Gender Roles, and Religiosity with Individual Denominations; Model 5 Alternative Controls, Religiosity with Combined Denominations, and Fundamentalism; and Model 6 Complete Alternative Controls, Attitudes toward Familial Gender Roles, Religiosity with Combined Denominations, and Fundamentalism. This yields two sets of model sequence: Models 1, 2, 3, & 4 and Models 1, 2, 5, & 6, which

are discussed in detail in my findings chapter.

In summary, I provided an explanation of the data, the measures, and the analytic plan for my study. In the next Chapter, I provide a detailed summary of the findings in my study. My hypotheses were supported if attitudes about gay marriage, attitudes toward familial gender roles, and religiosity were statistically significant and substantively important.



## **Chapter IV: Findings**

This chapter provides a detailed summary of the analyses I undertook in this study. My main research question was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage? I discuss my results based on univariate, bivariate, and multivariate analyses consistent with the hypotheses I presented in Chapter II. At the end of this chapter, I formally assess those hypotheses predicting attitudes about gay marriage relative to attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. In the following chapter, I discuss my findings at length including the important and unique contribution my research provides on attitudes about gay marriage.

### **Univariate Analyses**

Descriptive statistics for attitudes about gay marriage, attitudes toward familial gender roles, religiosity, religious affiliations, and the control variables are displayed on Table 2. Respondents' mean score on attitudes about gay marriage was 2.64 on a scale from 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating stronger agreement with gay marriage. Table 2 also provides the proportional distribution for my outcome, attitudes about gay marriage. In this 2006 sample, on balance respondents tended to hold negative views about gay marriage in that 52% of respondents disagreed with the statement, "Homosexuals should have the right to marry."

The index of attitudes toward familial gender roles had a mean score of 2.25, where higher scores indicate more traditional attitudes about women's roles within families. This mean is based on the random 50% subsample of the GSS who received the

questions that comprise the index. Overall, attitudes toward familial gender roles were slightly more traditional than non-traditional in the sample.

Nearly equal proportions of people in the GSS were not strongly religiously affiliated (0.37) or strongly affiliated (0.35) evident by the small difference in proportions (0.02) for both responses. In terms of how often respondents attended religious services, 23% reported never attending while 19% attended every week. The distributions for a religious person and for being a spiritual person were somewhat similar. For both variables, being “moderately” religious or spiritual was the mode. More respondents reported being very spiritual than very religious.

As shown in Table 2, a slight majority of respondents’ were Protestant (approximately 53%), while Catholics represented approximately one-quarter (24%) of the sample. Interestingly, approximately 17% of respondents did not have a religious affiliation. Together, Protestants and Catholics were predominated in the sample.

Looking at the fundamentalism of the religious affiliations, Table 2 also shows that most religious affiliations were moderate (0.38), followed by liberal religious affiliations (0.33). Fundamental religious affiliations were the smallest category (0.29).

More than half (0.57) of respondents were female. The mean age in years was 47.25, with age in years ranging between 18 and 89. Most respondents were married (0.47), followed by never married (0.25). Nineteen percent of respondents were divorced or separated, and 9% widowed. The majority of the sample identified as white (0.70). There were an equal amount of people who were non-Hispanic black and Hispanic (0.13) while 4% were non-Hispanic other which included those who identified as Asian, Native

American, or another race/ethnicity. Most respondents in the sample had a high school diploma followed by respondents with a bachelor's degree (0.17), while respondents with less than a high school education (0.14) were represented next.

### **Bivariate Analyses**

Bivariate results are useful in my study because they show which variables initially impact attitudes about gay marriage. In addition, bivariate associations show the relative strength of the variables predicting attitudes about gay marriage. Overall, patterns begin to emerge from the bivariate results. In my study, I looked at correlation coefficients, cross-tabular analysis, and regression for my results. All of the variables were related to attitudes about gay marriage as shown in Table 2, based on the results from bivariate regression models.

The index of attitudes toward familial gender roles was a measure of traditional attitudes. Respondents had slightly more traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles. Traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles were related to negative attitudes about gay marriage.

In Table 2, strength of religious affiliation predicted attitudes about gay marriage ( $p$ -value <0.001). Respondents with somewhat strong and strong religious affiliation had more negative attitudes about gay marriage compared to respondents with not very strong affiliation. Overall, respondents who had stronger religious affiliations had more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Table 2

*Means, Proportions, and Bivariate Statistics for Analytic Variables*

	Mean <sup>2</sup>	SD	<i>p</i> -value <sup>3</sup>
<b>Dependent Variable</b>			
Attitudes about gay marriage	2.64	1.50	
Strongly disagree	.35		
Disagree	.17		
Neither agree nor disagree	.13		
Agree	.20		
Strongly agree	.16		
<b>Independent Variables</b>			
Attitudes toward familial gender roles			
Gender index*	2.25	.654	<0.001
Missing gender index	.50		
Strength of religious affiliation			<0.001
Strong	.35		
Somewhat strong	.10		
Not very strong (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.37		
No religion	.17		
Missing strength of religious affiliation	.01		
Attendance at religious services			<0.001
Never (ref.) <sup>1</sup>	.23		
Less than once per year	.06		
Once a year	.14		
Several times a year	.10		
Once a month	.07		
2-3 times a month	.09		
Nearly every week	.05		
Every week	.19		
More than once per week	.07		
Missing attendance at religious services	.003		
Religious person			<0.001
Very religious	.19		
Moderately religious (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.43		
Slightly religious	.22		
Not religious	.16		
Missing religious person	.01		

Table 2

*Means, Proportions, and Bivariate Statistics for Analytic Variables, continued*

	Mean <sup>2</sup>	SD	<i>p</i> -value <sup>3</sup>
Spiritual person			<0.001
Very spiritual	.29		
Moderately spiritual (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.42		
Slightly spiritual	.19		
Not spiritual	.09		
Missing spiritual person	.01		
Religious affiliation			
<u>Individual denominations</u>			<0.001
Catholic (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.24		
Protestant			
Baptist			
American Baptist Association	.01		
Southern Baptist Convention	.06		
American Baptist Churches in the USA	.01		
National Baptist Convention of America and National Baptist Convention in the USA	.01		
Other Baptists	.06		
Methodist			
African Methodist Episcopal Church and African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church	.01		
United Methodist Church	.05		
Other Methodists	.01		
Lutheran			
American Lutheran Church and Lutheran Church in America	.01		
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod	.01		
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod	.01		
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America	.01		
Other Lutherans	.01		
Presbyterian			
United Presbyterian Church	.02		
Other Presbyterians	.01		
Episcopal Church	.02		
Church of Christ	.01		
Mormon	.02		
Pentecostal	.01		

Table 2

*Means, Proportions, and Bivariate Statistics for Analytic Variables, continued*

	Mean <sup>2</sup>	<i>SD</i>	<i>p-value</i> <sup>3</sup>
Non-denominational Protestants	.04		
Other Protestants	.13		
Christian and Orthodox Christian	.01		
Interdenominational (non-Protestant)	.01		
Jewish			
Orthodox and Conservative	.01		
Reform and Other Jew	.01		
Buddhist, Hindu, Other Eastern	.01		
Muslim, Islam	.01		
Other religion	.01		
None, no religion	.17		
<u>Combined Denominations</u>			<0.001
Catholic (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.24		
Protestant			
Baptist	.16		
Methodist	.07		
Lutheran	.04		
Presbyterian	.03		
Episcopal	.02		
Other Protestants	.20		
Jewish	.02		
Buddhist, Hindu, Other Eastern	.01		
Muslim, Islam	.01		
Other religion	.04		
None, no religion	.17		
Fundamentalism			<0.001
Fundamental	.29		
Moderate (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.38		
Liberal	.33		
Missing fundamentalism	.05		

Table 2

*Means, Proportions, and Bivariate Statistics for Analytic Variables, continued*

	Mean <sup>2</sup>	SD	p-value <sup>3</sup>
<b>Control Variables</b>			
Sex			<0.001
Female	.57		
Male (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.43		
Age in Years	47.25	17.14	<0.001
Marital Status			<0.001
Married (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.47		
Widowed	.09		
Divorced/separated	.19		
Never married	.25		
Race/Ethnicity			<0.001
Non-Hispanic white (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.70		
Non-Hispanic black	.13		
Hispanic	.13		
Non-Hispanic other	.04		
Education/Degree			<0.001
High School (ref) <sup>1</sup>	.51		
Less than high School	.14		
Junior college	.08		
Bachelor degree	.17		
Graduate degree	.10		

<sup>1</sup> (ref) denotes the reference group.

<sup>2</sup> Proportions, for valid distributions, may not sum to exactly 1.00 due to rounding.

<sup>3</sup> *p-value* for bivariate association with attitudes about gay marriage based on bivariate OLS

linear regression.

\*Based on a randomly determined 50% sample (n = 988).

Source: General Social Survey, 2006 (n = 1,977).

In bivariate analyses of attendance at religious services and attitudes about gay marriage, respondents who attended religious services nearly every week, every week, and more than once a week had more negative attitudes about gay marriage compared to respondents who never attended religious services. As shown in Table 2, attendance at religious services predicts attitudes about gay marriage (*p-value* <0.001).

Religious identity also predicts attitudes about gay marriage. Respondents who were very religious had more negative attitudes about gay marriage while respondents who were slightly religious had more positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to moderately religious respondents. In addition, respondents who were not religious had more positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to moderately religious respondents.

Respondents who were very spiritual had more negative attitudes about gay marriage while respondents who were slightly spiritual had more positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to moderately spiritual respondents. In addition, respondents who were not spiritual had more positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to moderately spiritual respondents.

Specific religious affiliations predict attitudes about gay marriage. For Individual Denominations (Option 1), American Baptists, Evangelical Lutherans, Lutherans from the Missouri Synod, Other Baptists, Other Protestants, non-denominational Protestants and Southern Baptists had more negative attitudes about gay marriage compared to Catholics. In contrast, respondents who were Interdenominational, Reform Jews, Other Jews, and respondents with no religious affiliations had more positive attitudes about



gay marriage compared to Catholics (reference group).

The Combined Denominations (Option 2) measure of religious affiliation was also related to attitudes about gay marriage. Results showed that Baptists, Methodists, and Other Protestants had more negative attitudes about gay marriage while respondents who were Jewish, affiliated with other religions, and with no religious affiliation had more positive attitudes about gay marriage.

Those with fundamental and liberal religious affiliations had different attitudes about gay marriage than moderates (*p-value* <0.001). Specifically, fundamental religious affiliations had more negative attitudes about gay marriage while liberal religious affiliations had more positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to moderate religious affiliations.

Turning to the bivariate results for the control variables, each is related to attitudes about gay marriage (*p-value* <0.001). Women had more positive attitudes about gay marriage than men. Age in years predicts attitudes about gay marriage; that is, older respondents had more negative attitudes about gay marriage. Marital status had an impact on attitudes about gay marriage in bivariate analysis. Compared to respondents who were married, respondents who were never married and divorced or separated had more positive attitudes about gay marriage. Bivariate analysis revealed that race/ethnicity predicts attitudes about gay marriage where respondents who were non-Hispanic black had more negative attitudes about gay marriage compared to respondents who were white. In addition, respondents who were more educated had more positive attitudes about gay marriage. Respondents with graduate and bachelor degrees had more

positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to respondents who completed high school, while respondents with less than a high school education had more negative attitudes about gay marriage compared to respondents with a high school education.

### **Multivariate Analyses**

I tested my hypotheses from Chapter II using a series of multivariate ordinary least squares linear regressions to evaluate attitudes about gay marriage. My hypotheses included: people with more traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage; people with stronger religious affiliation have more negative attitudes about gay marriage; people who attend religious services more often have more negative attitudes about gay marriage; people who are more religious have more negative attitudes about gay marriage; people who are less spiritual have more positive attitudes about gay marriage; specific religious affiliations are related to attitudes about gay marriage; and, people with fundamental religious affiliations have more negative attitudes about gay marriage

The multivariate analyses allowed me to statistically control potential sources of spuriousness. I fit many other models than the few I present and discuss here. I show in Tables 3 and 4 nesting the models by entering the independent variables in block format. I formally compare nested models using F-statistics to determine the relative fit of the models within each sequence.

I examined tolerance scores for multicollinearity in Model 4 (the Complete Model) and Model 6 (the Alternative Complete Model); some multicollinearity was present in both Models. In addition, I examined the standardized residual and

standardized predicted value plot for Models 4 and 6 and found when the predicted values were low and all above zero on the x-axis for the residuals and when the predicted values were high and all below zero on the y-axis for the residuals, assumptions of linearity were violated. Violations of linearity assumptions may limit the ability to find relationships between the dependent and independent variables.

The model sequences for interpreting my results are shown in Tables 3 and 4. Table 3 shows the results for Model 1, the Controls Model, then Model 2, the Familial Gender Roles Model, followed by Model 3, the Religiosity Model (using Individual Denominations), and then Model 4, the Complete Model. The Complete Model (Model 4) includes the control variables, attitudes toward familial gender roles, religiosity variables, and religious affiliation with Individual Denominations (Option 1) was the best fitting model in this sequence of models.

Following a similar sequence, Table 4 shows Model 1, the Controls Model, then Model 2, the Familial Gender Roles Model, followed by Model 5, the Religiosity Alternative Model (using Combined Denominations (Option 2), with fundamentalism) and finally, Model 6, the Complete Alternative Model. The Complete Alternative Model (Model 6) includes the control variables, attitudes toward familial gender roles, religiosity variables including fundamentalism, and religious affiliations with Combined Denominations (Option 2). In this sequence, Model 6 was the best fitting model.

### **Model 1.**

In Model 1, attitudes about gay marriage was regressed onto the demographics of sex, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, and highest degree earned (Table 3). Sex, age,

\marital status, race/ethnicity, and highest degree earned predict 10.2% of the variance in attitudes about gay marriage. Controlling all other demographics, the mean of agreement with attitudes about gay marriage for women was 0.28 higher than the mean for men. For every additional year of age, agreement with gay marriage decreased by 0.02, a weak and negative relationship ( $\beta = -.17$ ). The adjusted mean of agreement with gay marriage for widowed adults was 0.28 higher than married adults. Divorced or separated people had an adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage 0.31 higher than married adults. People who were never married had a mean agreement with gay marriage 0.59 higher than married adults. Net of controls, the mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents who were non-Hispanic black was 0.60 lower than respondents who were non-Hispanic white, the only statistically significant contrast among race/ethnicity. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with graduate degrees was 0.56 higher than respondents who completed high school only while the mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with less than a high school education was 0.28 lower than respondents who completed high school only. In this model, there were no other notable contrasts by highest degree earned. However, a trend appears where respondents with more education tend to had more positive attitudes about gay marriage than less educated adults.

### **Model 2.**

In Model 2, I regressed attitudes about gay marriage onto the control variables and attitudes toward familial gender roles (Table 3). The addition of attitudes toward familial gender roles made Model 2 a better fit than Model 1 ( $F_{2, 1962} = 20.21$  *p-value*

<0.001). The control variables and attitudes toward familial gender roles predict 12% of the variance in attitudes about gay marriage. For every unit increase in the gender index of attitudes toward familial gender roles, agreement with gay marriage decreased by 0.44, a weak and negative relationship ( $\beta = -.14$ ). Controlling all other demographics, the mean agreement with attitudes about gay marriage for women was 0.23 higher than men. For every additional year of age, agreement with gay marriage decreased by 0.01, a weak and negative relationship ( $\beta = -.15$ ). The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for adults who were never married was 0.58 higher than for married adults. Divorced or separated adults had an adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage 0.28 higher than for married adults.

Net of controls, the mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents who were non-Hispanic black was 0.59 lower than respondents who were non-Hispanic white, the only statistically significant contrast among race/ethnicity. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with graduate degrees was 0.49 higher than for those respondents who completed high school only, while the mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with less than a high school education was 0.25 lower than respondents who completed high school only.

### **Model 3.**

In Model 3, I regressed attitudes about gay marriage onto the control variables, the religiosity variables with Individual Denominations (Option 1) (Table 3). The addition of these religiosity measures made Model 3 a better fit than Model 1, the Controls Model ( $3_{1,1915} = 8.07, p\text{-value} < 0.001$ ). Together these predictors explained

25.6% of the variance in attitudes about gay marriage.

There was no relationship between strength of religious affiliation and attitudes about gay marriage in Model 3. The mean adjusted agreement with gay marriage for respondents who attended religious services more often (more than once a week, every week, or nearly every week) was lower than for those respondents who never attended religious services. In terms of identity as a religious person, the mean adjusted agreement with gay marriage for respondents who were not religious was 0.47 higher than respondents who were moderately religious. For slightly religious respondents that difference was 0.30 higher, and for very religious respondents it was 0.32 lower than for those who were moderately religious. Differences across identifying as a spiritual person were less pronounced. The mean adjusted agreement with gay marriage for respondents who considered themselves very spiritual was 0.18 higher than those respondents who were moderately spiritual.

As shown in Table 3, controlling all other predictor variables in Model 3, the mean agreement with gay marriage for Southern Baptists, Other Baptists, members of the Lutheran Missouri Synod, non-denominational Protestants, and Other Protestants was lower than for Catholics (0.68, 0.40, 0.35, and 0.59 respectively). In addition, the mean adjusted agreement with gay marriage for Interdenominational non-Protestants and Reform Jews and Other Jews was higher than for Catholics (0.54 and 0.78 respectively). All other religious groups identified in Model 3 had the same level of agreement with gay marriage as Catholics.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 3, the mean agreement for women was 0.45 higher than for men. The addition of religiosity measures in Model 3 (vs. Model 2) appears to widen the sex differences in attitudes about gay marriage. The weak, negative relationship between age and support for gay marriage from Model 2 narrows somewhat with the addition of religiosity in Model 3. The adjusted mean agreement for never married people was 0.37 higher than for married adults, while for divorced or separated people that difference was 0.18 higher than for married adults. The mean adjusted agreement with gay marriage for non-Hispanic blacks was 0.26 lower than for whites. Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 3, the mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with graduate degrees and bachelor degrees was, respectively, 0.47 and 0.19 higher than for those respondents who completed high school only. The adjusted mean with gay marriage for respondents with graduate degrees and bachelor degrees was, respectively, 0.47 and 0.19 higher than for those respondents who completed high school only. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with less than a high school education was 0.29 lower than respondents who completed high school only. As in Model 1 and Model 2, women, never married, divorced or separated, and more educated respondents had more positive attitudes about gay marriage while those who were older respondents, non-Hispanic blacks, and less educated respondents tended to had more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Table 3: Regression Models Predicting Attitudes About Gay Marriage Models 1-4

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$
Women	.28	.07	.09 *	.23	.07	.08 *	.45	.06	.15 *	.40	.06	.13 *
Men (ref)												
Age	-.02	.00	-.17 *	-.01	.00	-.15 *	-.01	.01	.11 *	-.01	.00	-.10 *
Marital status												
Married (ref)												
Widowed	.28	.13	.05 *	.11	.12	.02	.12	.12	.02	.11	.12	.02
Never married	.59	.08	.17 *	.58	.09	.17 *	.37		.11 *	.36	.08	.10 *
Divorced or separated	.31	.09	.08 *	.28	.09	.07 *	.18		.05 *	.17	.08	.04 *
Race/ethnicity												
Non-Hispanic white (ref)												
Non-Hispanic black	-.60	.10	-.13 *	-.59	.10	-.13 *	-.26	.10	-.06 *	-.26	.10	-.06 *
Non-Hispanic other	-.04	.18	-.01	-.16	.18	-.02	-.18	.18	-.02	-.16	.18	-.02
Hispanic	-.06	.11	-.01	-.08	.11	-.02	-.11	.11	-.02	-.08	.11	-.02
Highest degree earned												
Less than high school	-.28	.10	-.07 *	-.25	.10	-.06 *	-.29	.09	-.07 *	-.27	.09	-.06 *
High school (ref)												
Junior college	.04	.12	.01	.09	.11	.02	.11	.11	.02	.09	.11	.02
Bachelor degree	.17	.09	.04	.17	.09	.04	.19	.09	.05 *	.17	.09	.04
Graduate degree	.56	.19	.11 *	.49	.12	.09 *	.47	.11	.09 *	.43	.11	.08 *
Attitudes familial gender roles												
Missing				-.44	.07	-.14 *				-.31	.07	-.10 *
Religiosity												
Strength religious affiliation												
Strong							-.17	.09	-.06	-.19	.09	-.06 *
Somewhat strong							-.05	.11	-.10	-.05	.11	-.01
Not very strong (ref)												
Missing							-.02	.31	.00	.00	.43	.00
Attendance												
Never (ref)												
Less than once a year							.20	.14	.03	.18	.14	.03
Once a year							-.08	.11	-.02	-.09	.11	-.02
Several times a year							-.09	.12	-.02	-.12	.12	-.02
Once a month							.06	.14	.01	.04	.14	.01
2-3 times a month							-.11	.14	-.02	-.11	.14	-.02
Nearly every week							-.43	.17	-.06 *	-.45	.17	-.06 *
Every week							-.46	.12	-.12 *	-.45	.12	-.02 *
More than once a week							-.81	.16	-.14 *	-.78	.16	-.14 *
Missing							-.93	.66	-.03	-.98	.66	-.03
Religious person												
Not religious							.47	.12	.11 *	.44	.12	.11 *
Slightly religious							.30	.09	.08 *	.29	.09	.08 *
Moderately religious (ref)												
Very religious							-.32	.10	-.08 *	-.30	.10	-.09 *
Missing							.12	.41	.01	.16	.41	.01
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.10			.12			.26			.26	
<i>F</i> Statistic		19			19			27			19	

\**p*<.05 one-tailed *t* tests for the differences between dummy variables within each categorical variable.

(ref) denotes reference group.

Source: General Social Survey, 2006 (n = 1977).



Table 3: *Regression Models Predicting Attitudes About Gay Marriage Models 1-4, continued*

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3			Model 4		
	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$
Spiritual person												
Not spiritual							-.09	.13	-.02	-.09	.13	-.02
Slightly spiritual							-.04	.09	-.01	-.03	.09	-.01
Moderately spiritual (ref)												
Very spiritual							.18	.09	.06 *	.18	.09	.05 *
Missing							-.02	.31	.00	-.05	.31	.00
Individual denominations												
Catholics (ref)												
Protestants												
American Baptist Association							.12	.31	.01	.18	.31	.01
Southern Baptist Convention							-.68	.12	-.12 *	-.67	.13	-.12 *
American Baptist Churches in the USA							-.71	.38	-.04	-.67	.38	-.04
National Baptist Conventions							.44	.43	.02	.45	.43	.02
Other Baptists							-.40	.14	-.07 *	-.41	.14	-.07 *
Methodists												
African Methodist Churches							.45	.46	.02	.41	.46	.02
United Methodist Church							-.17	.15	-.03	-.19	.15	-.03
Other Methodists							-.42	.28	-.03	-.42	.28	-.03
Lutherans												
American Lutheran Churches							.27	.36	.02	.26	.36	.01
Lutheran Church Missouri Synod							-.56	.29	-.04 *	-.57	.29	-.04 *
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod							.28	.43	.01	.26	.42	.01
Evangelical Lutheran Church of America							-.66	.43	-.03	-.63	.42	-.03
Other Lutherans							-.12	.29	-.01	-.09	.29	.01
Presbyterians												
United Presbyterian Church							.13	.21	.01	.14	.21	.01
Other Presbyterians							-.38	.34	-.02	-.40	.34	-.02
Episcopal Church							-.01	.25	.00	-.01	.25	.00
Church of Christ							.13	.29	.01	.12	.20	-.01
Mormon							-.04	.27	.00	-.03	.27	.00
Pentecostal							-.02	.24	-.02	-.05	.23	-.01
Non-denominational Protestants							-.59	.14	-.09 *	-.56	.14	-.09 *
Other Protestants							-.35	.12	-.08 *	-.35	.12	-.08 *
Christian and Orthodox Christian							-.09	.22	-.01	-.08	.22	-.01
Interdenominational (non-Protestants)							.84	.31	.06 *	.79	.31	.05 *
Jewish												
Orthodox and conservative							.68	.41	.03	.63	.41	.03
Reform and other Jews							.78	.32	.05 *	.83	.32	.05 *
Buddhist, Hindu, and other eastern							.05	.30	.00	.08	.30	.01
Muslim and Islam							-.56	.43	-.03	-.41	.43	-.02
Other religion							.13	.40	.01	.13	.40	.01
None or no religion							.05	.12	.01	.03	.12	.01
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.10			.12			.26			.26	
<i>F</i> Statistic		19			19			27			19	

\**p*<.05 one-tailed *t* tests for the differences between dummy variables within each categorical variable.

(ref) denotes reference group.

Source: General Social Survey, 2006 (n = 1977).

Table 4: Regression Models Predicting Attitudes About Gay Marriage Model 5 and Model 6

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 5			Model 6		
	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$
Women	.28	.07	.09 *	.23	.07	.08 *	.44	.06	.15 *	.40	.06	.13 *
Men (ref)												
Age	-.02	.00	-.17 *	-.01	.00	-.15 *	-.01	.01	.11 *	-.01	.00	-.10 *
Marital status												
Married (ref)												
Widowed	.28	.13	.05 *	.11	.12	.02	.13	.12	.02	.11	.12	.02
Never married	.59	.08	.17 *	.58	.09	.17 *	.37	.08	.10 *	.36	.08	.10 *
Divorced or separated	.31	.09	.08 *	.28	.09	.07 *	.19	.08	.05 *	.17	.08	.05 *
Race/ethnicity												
Non-Hispanic white (ref)												
Non-Hispanic black	-.60	.10	-.13 *	-.59	.10	-.13 *	-.15	.10	-.03	-.15	.10	-.03
Non-Hispanic other	-.04	.18	-.01	-.16	.18	-.02	-.16	.18	-.02	-.14	.18	-.02
Hispanic	-.06	.11	-.01	-.08	.11	-.02	-.10	.11	-.02	-.07	.10	-.02
Highest degree earned												
Less than high school	-.28	.10	-.07 *	-.25	.10	-.06 *	-.30	.09	-.07 *	-.27	.09	-.06 *
High school (ref)												
Junior college	.04	.12	.01	.09	.11	.02	.11	.11	.02	.09	.11	.02
Bachelor degree	.17	.09	.04	.17	.09	.04	.19	.09	.05 *	.17	.09	.04
Graduate degree	.56	.19	.11 *	.49	.12	.09 *	.42	.11	.08 *	.38	.11	.07 *
Attitudes familial gender roles												
Missing				-.44	.07	-.14 *				-.32	.07	-.10 *
Religiosity				.07	.06	.03				.06	.06	.02
Strength religious affiliation												
Strong							-.18	.09	-.06 *	-.20	.09	-.06 *
Somewhat strong							-.05	.11	-.01	-.06	.11	-.01
Not very strong (ref)												
Missing							-.21	.38	-.01	.00	.43	.00
Attendance												
Never (ref)												
Less than once a year							.21	.14	.04	.20	.14	.03
Once a year							-.08	.11	-.02	-.08	.12	-.02
Several times a year							-.07	.12	-.01	-.10	.12	-.02
Once a month							.09	.14	.02	.07	.14	.01
2-3 times a month							-.09	.14	-.02	-.09	.14	-.02
Nearly every week							-.41	.17	-.06 *	-.43	.17	-.06 *
Every week							-.44	.12	-.12 *	-.43	.12	-.11 *
More than once a week							-.77	.16	-.13 *	-.75	.16	-.13 *
Missing							-.96	.65	-.03	-.1	.64	-.03
Religious person												
Not religious							.45	.12	.11 *	.44	.12	.11 *
Slightly religious							.29	.09	.08 *	.29	.09	.08 *
Moderately religious (ref)												
Very religious							-.30	.10	-.08 *	-.29	.09	-.06 *
Missing							.16	.41	.01	.16	.41	.01
$R^2$		.10			.12			.25			.26	
<i>F</i> Statistic		19			19			19			14	

\**p*<.05 one-tailed *t* tests for the differences between dummy variables within each categorical variable.

(ref) denotes reference group.

Source: General Social Survey, 2006 (n = 1977).

Table 4: Regression Models Predicting Attitudes About Gay Marriage Model 5 and Model 6

Variable	Model 1			Model 2			Model 5			Model 6		
	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>se</i>	$\beta$
Spiritual Person												
Not spiritual							-.09	.13	-.02	-.09	.13	-.02
Slightly spiritual							-.04	.09	-.01	-.04	.09	-.01
Moderately spiritual (ref)												
Very spiritual							.16	.09	.05	.16	.08	.05
Missing							-.10	.31	-.01	-.13	.31	-.01
Combined denominations												
Catholics												
Protestants												
Baptists							-.54	.16	-.13 *	-.51	.16	-.12 *
Methodists							-.70	.23	-.12 *	-.70	.22	-.12 *
Lutherans							-.20	.19	-.03	-.18	.17	-.02
Presbyterians							.48	.25	-.05	-.45	.25	-.05
Episcopal Church							-.02	.52	-.05	-.02	.51	.12
Other Protestants							-.51	.12	-.14 *	-.48	.12	-.13 *
Jewish							.76	.52	.19	.76	.52	.18
Buddhist, Hindu, and other eastern							.05	.60	.03	-.28	.97	.00
Muslim and Islam							-.59	.71	.01	-.80	.55	-.02
Other religion							.03	.21	.01	.03	.43	.04
None or no religion							.05	.43	.03 *	.03	.43	.04 *
Fundamentalism (Option 2)												
Fundamental							.03	.12	.01	-.01	.12	.00
Liberal							.56	.20	.17 *	.54	.20	.16 *
Missing							.44	.23	.06	.43	.22	.06

$R^2$	.10	.12	.25	.26
<i>F</i> Statistic	19	19	19	14

\* $p < .05$  one-tailed *t* tests for the differences between dummy variables within each categorical variable.

(ref) denotes reference group.

Source: General Social Survey, 2006 (n = 1977).

#### **Model 4.**

Model 4 predicts attitudes about gay marriage based on the controls, attitudes toward familial gender roles, religiosity, and religious affiliation with Individual Denominations (Option 1) (Table 3). Model 4 is a better fit than Model 3 ( $F_{4, 1913} = 10.92$ ,  $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ ) and than Model 2 ( $F_{2, 1962} = 20.21$   $p\text{-value} < 0.001$ ). Together these predictors in Model 4 explain 26.4 % of the variance in attitudes about gay marriage.

For every unit increase in the index of attitudes toward familial gender roles, agreement with gay marriage decreased by 0.31, a weak and negative relationship ( $\beta = -.10$ ). The addition of religiosity measures in Model 4 (vs. Model 2) appears to narrow the relationship between attitudes toward familial gender roles and attitudes about gay marriage.

There was a relationship between strength of religious affiliation and attitudes about gay marriage in Model 4 but not in Model 3. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with strong religious affiliation was 0.19 lower than respondents with not very strong religious affiliation. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents who attended religious services more often (more than once a week, every week, or nearly every week) was lower than for respondents who never attended religious services.

In regards to identity as a religious person, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents who were not religious was 0.44 higher than for those respondents who were moderately religious. For slightly religious respondents that

difference was 0.29 higher and for very religious respondents, it was 0.30 lower than for those who were moderately religious. Similar to Model 3, differences across identity as a spiritual person were less notable. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents who considered themselves to be very spiritual respondents was 0.18 higher than moderately spiritual respondents.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 4, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for Southern Baptists (0.67), Other Baptists (0.41), members of the Lutheran Missouri Synod (0.57), non-denominational Protestants (0.35), and Other Protestants (0.56) was lower than for Catholics. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for Interdenominational non-Protestants, Reform Jews and Other Jews was higher than for Catholics (0.79 and 0.83, respectively). All other Individual Denominations identified in Model 4 had the same level of agreement with gay marriage as Catholics.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 4, the adjusted mean agreement for women was 0.40 higher than for men. The addition of attitudes toward familial gender roles in Model 4 appears to widen the sex differences in attitudes about gay marriage. There were differences in respondents' views on gay marriage based on marital status. The adjusted mean agreement for never married respondents was 0.36 higher than for married adults, for divorced or separated respondents that difference was 0.17 higher than for married adults. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for non-Hispanic blacks was 0.26 lower than for whites. Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 4, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with graduate degrees

was 0.43 higher than for those respondents who completed high school only. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with less than a high school education was 0.27 lower than respondents who completed high school only. As in Models 1, 2, and 3, women, never married, divorced or separated, and more educated respondents had more positive attitudes about gay marriage while, respondents who were older, non-Hispanic blacks, and less educated tended to have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

The next sequence of models is based on Table 4. Models 1 and 2 are shown with Models 5 and 6. Model 5, the Religiosity Alternative Model, includes the control variables, the religiosity variables, the Combined Denominations (Option 2) variable, and fundamentalism. Model 6, the Alternative Complete Model, includes all the variables in Models 1, 2, and 5. Models 5 and 6 are alternatives for discussion and will be discussed next.

### **Model 5.**

In Model 5, attitudes about gay marriage were regressed onto the control variables, the religiosity variables, religious affiliations with Combined Denominations, and fundamentalism (Table 4). The addition of Combined Denominations with fundamentalism showed Model 5 is a better fit than Model 1 ( $F_{5,1930} = 10.94$ ,  $p$ -value  $< 0.001$ ). Together the predictors explained 24.7% of the variance in attitudes about gay marriage.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 5, the mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with strong religious affiliation was 0.18 lower than

respondents with not very strong religious affiliation. In addition, the mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents who attended religious services (more than once a week, every week, or nearly every week) was lower than for those respondents who never attended religious services.

In terms of identity as a religious person, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents who were not religious was 0.48 higher than for those respondents who were moderately religious. For slightly religious respondents that difference was 0.29 higher and for very religious respondents, it was 0.30 lower than moderately religious respondents. In Model 5, there was no relationship between religious identity as a spiritual person and attitudes about gay marriage.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 5, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of Baptists was 0.54 lower than Catholics, of Methodists was 0.70 lower than Catholics, of Other Protestants was 0.51 lower than Catholics. Also, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents with no religion was 0.05 higher than Catholics. Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 5, the mean agreement with gay marriage for liberal religious affiliations was 0.56 higher than for moderate religious affiliations. All other Individual Denominations identified in Model 5 had the same level of agreement with gay marriage as Catholics.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 5, the adjusted mean agreement for women was 0.44 higher than for men. The addition of religiosity measures in Model 5 appears to widen the sex differences in attitudes about gay marriage. For every year increase in age, there was a 0.01 decrease in agreement with gay marriage. The adjusted

mean agreement for never married respondents and divorced or separated respondents was higher than married adults (0.37 and 0.19), respectively. All race/ethnicity groups had the same level of agreement with gay marriage as white respondents in Model 5.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 5, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with graduate degrees and bachelor degrees was higher than respondents who completed high school (0.42 and 0.19), respectively. Additionally, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with less than a high school education was 0.30 lower than those respondents who completed high school. As in all other models, women, never married respondents, divorced or separated respondents, and respondents who were more educated had more positive attitudes about gay marriage while older respondents and respondents who were less educated tended to have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

#### **Model 6.**

Model 6 predicts attitudes about gay marriage based on the controls, attitudes toward familial gender roles, religiosity, religious affiliation with Combined Denominations (Option 2), and fundamentalism (Table 4). The addition of attitudes toward familial gender roles for Model 6 with religiosity variables, Combined Denominations Option 2, and fundamentalism were ( $F_{6, 1928} = 11.88, p\text{-value} < 0.001$ ). Together these predictors explained 25.6% of the variance in attitudes about gay marriage. Model 6 was a better fit than Model 5.

Similar to Model 4, for every unit increase in the gender index of attitudes toward familial gender roles, agreement with gay marriage decreased by 0.32, a weak and



negative relationship ( $\beta = -.10$ ).

The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents with strong religious affiliation was 0.20 lower than for those respondents who did not have very strong religious affiliation. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents who attended religious services (more than once a week, every week, or nearly every week) was lower than respondents who never attended religious services (0.75, 0.43, and 0.43 respectively).

In regards to religious identity as a religious person, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents who were not religious and slightly religious were higher than for those who were not very religious (0.44 and 0.29, respectively). The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents who were very religious was 0.29 lower than for respondents who were not very religious.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 6, the mean agreement with gay marriage of Baptists was 0.51 lower than Catholics, of Methodists was 0.70 lower than Catholics, of Other Protestants was 0.48 lower than Catholics. All other Combined Denominations had the same level of agreement with gay marriage as Catholics. Also, the mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents with no religion was 0.03 higher than Catholics.

The mean differences of respondents who were Episcopal, Jewish, and those who had no religion were added to the slope coefficient of liberal religious affiliation since all the scores within these denominations were in the liberal category. For respondents who were Muslim/Islamic or were Hindu, Buddhist, and members of Other Eastern religions,

the mean differences were added to the slope coefficient of missing affiliation since all the scores within these denominations were not categorized within the fundamentalism variable. For example, the original unstandardized score for Muslim/Islamics was -1.032. The missing value of the unstandardized score (+0.442) was deducted from the original score to give a mean difference of -0.59. For all other Combined Denominations, other than those mentioned above, the scores were distributed among the fundamental, moderate, and liberal categories and did not require further computation for interpretive purposes. Model 6 also had multicollinearity which can bias the results of the findings.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 6, the mean agreement with gay marriage of liberal religious affiliations was 0.54 higher than for moderate religious affiliations. Fundamental religious affiliations had the same level of agreement with gay marriage as moderate religious affiliations.

Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 6, the adjusted mean agreement for women was 0.40 higher than men. For every year increase in age, there was a 0.01 decrease in agreement with gay marriage. There were differences in respondents' attitudes about gay marriage based on marital status. The adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for never married respondents and for those who were divorced or separated was higher than for married adults (0.36 and 0.17 respectively). Controlling all other predictor variables in Model 6, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with graduate degrees was 0.38 higher than respondents who completed high school. The mean agreement with gay marriage for respondents with less than a high

school education was .027 lower than respondents who completed high school only.

As in all other models, women, never married respondents, divorced or separated respondents, and respondents who were more educated had more positive attitudes about gay marriage, while older respondents and respondents who were less educated tended to have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

### **Hypothesis Assessment**

In this section, I assess my hypotheses from Chapter II based on my findings. All hypothesized relationships were tested controlling sex, age, marital status, race/ethnicity, and highest degree earned. Controlling these demographic variables reduced the risk that spurious variables may account for the detected relationships.

*Hypothesis 1:* People with more traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. This hypothesis is supported in the findings, across all my models. Based on Model 2, for example, for every unit increase in the index of attitudes toward familial gender roles, there was a 0.44 decrease in attitudes about gay marriage.

*Hypothesis 2:* People with strong religious affiliation have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. This hypothesis is supported in the findings under certain conditions. For example, respondents with strong religious affiliations had a lower adjusted mean agreement than those who did not have very strong religious affiliation in Models 4, 5, and 6 but not in Model 3.

*Hypothesis 3:* People who attend religious services more often have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. This hypothesis is supported in the findings. Comparing

the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage, respondents who attended religious services nearly every week (-0.45), every week (-0.45), and more than once a week (-0.78) agreed less than respondents who never attended religious services in Model 4 for example.

*Hypothesis 4:* People who are more religious have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. This hypothesis is supported in the findings. In Model 3 for example, the adjusted mean agreement with gay marriage of respondents who were very religious respondents was 0.32 lower than respondents who were not very religious.

*Hypothesis 5:* People who are less spiritual have more positive attitudes about gay marriage. This hypothesis is not supported by my multivariate findings. However, my study found that respondents who were more spiritual have more positive attitudes about gay marriage in Model 3 and 4 but not in Models 5 and 6.

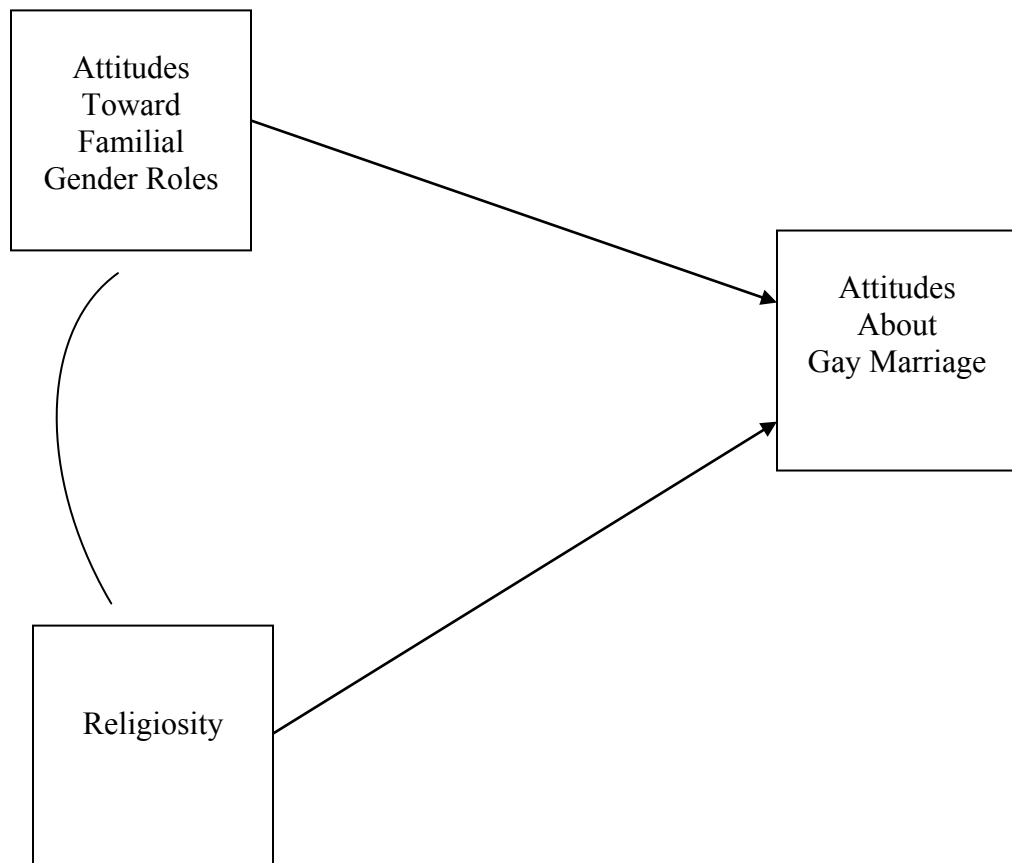
*Hypothesis 6:* Specific religious affiliations are related to attitudes about gay marriage. This hypothesis is supported. For example, in Model 4, net of other variables, Other Baptists (-0.41) and Other Protestants (-0.35) have more negative attitudes about gay marriage than Catholics while Reform Jews and Other Jews (+0.83) have more positive attitudes about gay marriage. In Model 6, Baptists (-0.51), Methodists (-0.70), and Other Protestants (-0.48) have more negative attitudes about gay marriage while Reform Jews and Other Jews (+0.76) have more positive attitudes about gay marriage.

*Hypothesis 7:* People with fundamental religious affiliations have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. This hypothesis is not supported by the findings. Liberal religious affiliations are more accepting than moderate religious affiliations.

A conceptual diagram (Figure 1) shows the prediction of attitudes about gay marriage. The diagram demonstrates multiple causations between attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity relative to attitudes about gay marriage. Indirect and direct effects are not applicable in the diagram. Attitudes toward familial gender roles are related to attitudes about gay marriage. Religiosity is related to attitudes about gay marriage. Measured together, attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity are related to attitudes about gay marriage.

In Chapter V, I provide an overview of the findings and how my research contributes to the literature on attitudes about gay marriage. There I also consider the limitations of my study. In addition, I discuss the implications of these findings in terms of attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity, and I outline their impact on attitudes about gay marriage.

**Figure 1. Conceptual Diagram: Attitudes About Gay Marriage**



*Figure 1.* Multiple causation of attitudes about gay marriage including attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity.

## **Chapter V: Discussion**

In Chapter V, I give an overview of the findings and discuss how my research contributes to the literature on attitudes about gay marriage. I include the limitations of my study. I also discuss the implications of my findings relative to attitudes about gay marriage. My study's main research question was: Do traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and conservative, moderate, and liberal views about religiosity impact attitudes about gay marriage? I used publicly-available data from the GSS of 1,977 respondents who responded to the statement about gay marriage in 2006.

### **Overview of Findings and Contributions to Research**

My study found that people with traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. In addition, people with strong religious affiliation, people who attended religious services more often, and people who were very religious have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. In contrast, people who were slightly religious and not religious have more positive attitudes about gay marriage. Furthermore, specific religious affiliations, namely Southern Baptist Convention, Other Baptists, members of the Lutheran Missouri Synod, Other Protestants, and non-denominational Protestants have more negative attitudes about gay marriage while Interdenominational Protestants, Reform Jews, and Other Jews have more positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to Catholics.

Previous research has not studied together attitudes toward familial gender roles and attitudes about gay marriage as defined in this research. This study contributes to and extends the literature on attitudes toward familial gender roles and attitudes about

gay marriage. Traditionalists contend that children need both a male father and a female mother. Ideally, traditionalists believe fathers should be the main bread winners and women should stay home and take care of family matters (Edwards, 2007; Gerson, 2010; Lubbers et al. 2009; Shiller, 2007). Gay families and gay marriage have been blamed by conservatives as culprits of social problems in the United States including the breakdown of the traditional family (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Edwards, 2007).

In contrast to traditional beliefs about familial gender roles, some studies on the well-being of children from gay couples illustrate that positive psychological and behavioral adjustment is more a function of family processes and interactions, than a direct function of household composition such as having one father and one mother (Alderson, 2004; Avery et al., 2007; Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Chan, et al., 1998; Gerson, 2010; Lubbers, 2009).

However, my study found people with traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. In addition, the topic of gay marriage is still controversial in the United States and appears to be in the process of transformation. Additional research is needed to assist educators, activists, and policy makers about gay marriage. I discuss directions for future research below.

Religiosity is also a strong indicator of attitudes about gay marriage. Various aspects of religiosity have been studied with predictable outcomes similar to the findings in my study (Brumbaugh, et al., 2009; Olson et al., 2006; Sherkat, et al., 2011; Whitehead, 2010). Whitehead (2010) found that people who attended religious services more frequently were 16% less likely than those who did not attend religious services to



agree with gay marriage. Similarly, I found that people who attended religious services more often had more negative attitudes about gay marriage. Attendance at religious services have a primary influence on individual beliefs and attitudes. It is important for advocates of gay marriage to get positive messages about gay marriage into churches both at the institutional level and more importantly, at the individual level. Individuals within churches can have an influence over beliefs and attitudes of others within their affiliations. A group of individuals can challenge the attitudes of institutional leaders to change negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Previous research has shown that conservative, moderate, and liberal religious denominations have multiple positions on gay marriage (Olson, et al., 2006). Some religions support gay marriage, while other religions have remained neutral on the issue. Still other religions explicitly oppose gay marriage (Olson, et al., 2006). Religious denominations vary greatly on their attitudes about gay marriage. For example, Baptists and Methodists as institutional religious organizations have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. Institutional religious level refers to the congregation as an organizational whole with leaders of the religious institutions stating publicly their particular religious affiliations' views on gay marriage. However, in my study the American Baptist Association, American Baptist Churches in the USA, and respondents from the National Baptist Convention did not have more negative attitudes about gay marriage which illustrates the differences between institutional level and individual level attitudes about gay marriage. Furthermore, at an institutional level, my study found Methodists have more negative attitudes about gay marriage but on an individual level, African Methodist

Churches, United Methodist Churches, and Other Methodists did not have negative attitudes about gay marriage. Arguably, religious organizations as institutions and personal beliefs of congregants at the individual level differ. This is important to know because individual beliefs are an avenue for social change. Social acceptance of gay marriage can increase by influencing individual attitudes. Every person can advocate for gay marriage by talking positively about gay marriage with others. Social change can happen locally with individuals.

My study found differences in institutional and individual religious organizations which can provide advocates, activists, and educators an opportunity to design programs, events, and media publications targeting resources to individuals within moderate religious organizations. For example, offering to speak at church events, hosting a film screening, or distributing flyers to religious organizations about gay marriage can be helpful. People who are gay can join churches so congregants get to know them personally.

It is important to study gay marriage during a time of debate and controversy within religious organizations in the United States to assist with understanding attitudes about gay marriage. Understanding who holds negative attitudes and why negative attitudes exist allows proponents of gay marriage opportunities to counter negative public statements with positive statements, target moderate groups for educational activities, and enlist liberal groups to assist with advocacy.

## **Limitations**

This study had several limitations. When secondary data analysis is used to examine a sensitive topic, such as attitudes about gay marriage, the measures can be problematic. The data are subjective in nature and self-report bias can occur (Avery, 2007; Rye & Meaney, 2009).

Causal inferences cannot be determined in a cross-sectional study such as this one; however, correlation analysis and regression tests were used to establish whether there were statistical relationships between the dependent variable and the independent variables. Multivariate analyses using ordinary least squares linear regression models were conducted to test my hypotheses and to statistically control for potential sources of spuriousness. The largest threat to making causal assertion was spurious association of variables not included in this study. Another threat to making causal assertions in this study was time-order. For all of my hypotheses, it was not possible to assert whether the independent variable occurs before the dependent variable since data for both were collected at the same point in time.

There were also violations of linearity. I used OLS linear regression, even though the dependent variable was ordinal. These violations may limit the ability to find relationships between variables because estimates are biased. There is also a low R square which explains the amount of variance in the dependent variable. Perhaps future research will use ordered logistic regression to avoid this problem.

Another limitation of my study is the lack of political, economic, or regional location of respondents that may have revealed additional information about attitudes

about gay marriage relative to attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. Political party affiliation may be linked to religious affiliation. In addition, the socioeconomic and region of location that respondents' lived may have an influence on attitudes about gay marriage relative to attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity.

### **Implications**

Since the GSS data uses a national probability sample, I can generalize my results to the entire adult population of the United States for the year 2006. Specifically, a multi-stage area sample was used for the GSS and provides excellent external validity.

This study's most noteworthy findings were the relationships between traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and specific religious affiliations and attitudes about gay marriage. My study found that adults with more traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. In addition, my study found that Southern Baptists, Other Baptists, members of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, non-denominational Protestants, and Other Protestants have more negative attitudes about gay marriage while interdenominational non-Protestants, Reform Jews and Other Jews have more positive attitudes about gay marriage. These findings confirm that attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage. Understanding social scientific research provides information, clarity, and direction for activism, advocacy, and social change activities. Social change activities happen at the individual and group level. Social science research provides motivation and can generate ideas for social acceptance of gay marriage.

This study's most consistent predictors of negative attitudes about gay marriage were traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles and more frequent attendance at religious services while the most consistent predictors of positive attitudes about gay marriage were respondents who were slightly religious or not religious. In addition, women, people who were never married and divorced or separated, and more educated people have more positive attitudes about gay marriage while older people, people who were non-Hispanic black, and people who were less educated have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Predictors of attitudes about gay marriage can inform educators, activists, advocates, and policy makers by targeting individuals and groups of people for social change activities. Individuals from moderate religious groups could be invited to attend events or encouraged to view films. Media messages could be generated for the radio, television, or for public addresses about the benefits of legalized marriage for gay families.

The predictors of gay marriage demonstrate the strength and potential for social change. Giving the message to the media that opinions are changing about gay marriage can assist with transforming other's opinions about gay marriage. For example, activists, advocates, and educators who understand that Southern Baptists have consistently and historically had negative attitudes about gay marriage may be wasting valuable resources trying to change the attitudes of Southern Baptists, and instead should focus resources on individual religious organizations who have not consistently or historically supported gay marriage. In addition, collaborating with individual religious groups that have positive

attitudes about gay marriage may be useful in influencing those religious groups who are in the midst of transformation about gay marriage. Training events, guest speakers, flyers and information sent to church bulletins, setting up meetings to discuss gay marriage are some ideas to generate communication to moderate religious groups and individuals within church organizations.

One of the most important aspects for the legalization of gay marriage comes from gay families whose children are currently unprotected from discrimination. The lack of policies and laws that can provide a safety net for gay families in most of the United States does not exist. Protecting all families regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity should be a priority over ideological discourse.

The current level of marriage policies and laws do not meet the needs of gay families. In addition, marriage laws and policies have not adapted to gay families in the United States leaving some families without the benefits of legalized marriage (Alderson, 2004; Avery, 2007; Chan et al; Glaser, 2005; Killian, 2010; Mayo & Gunderson, 2000; McClain, 2006; Mello, 2004; Nussbaum, 2009). Today's families and parents include kinship families, adoptive families, foster families, and gay families (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Brumbaugh, et al, 2008; Cherlin, 2004; Gerson, 2010). Attitudes about gay families play an important role in the formation of attitudes about gay marriage. Recognizing the needs of gay families can help improve attitudes about gay marriage.

Equal treatment for gay and lesbian parents and their families equates to protecting their dignity, safety and identity as a family. Health insurance, social security benefits, taxes, home ownership, inheritance, adoption, income and immigration are components

of legalized marriage. Marriage provides entitlements, responsibilities, security, legitimacy and social standing for children in families (Alderson, 2004; Mello, 2004; Nussbaum, 2009).

Religiosity is a strong predictor of gay marriage. Some religious organizations are polarized between fundamental, moderate, and liberal views. The polarization along fundamental and liberal lines continues to prohibit the legalization of gay marriage. Fundamentalists believe in the literal interpretation of the Bible, have more frequent attendance at religious services, and consider themselves to be more religious. Moderate religiosity is less predictable and represents a large number of people in transformation over the issue of gay marriage. Liberalists interpret the Bible with speculation and refer more often to the New Testament because it is considered more modern. Liberalists attend religious services less often and may not be as religious as fundamentalists. This is important to know because understanding how the Bible has been used to deter gay marriage motivates proponents of gay marriage to read the Bible more and inform the public about what the Bible says in other passages that offers support for gay marriage. In addition, this helps to understand why liberalists interpret the Bible with speculation and attend religious services less often.

Engaging liberalists to help with advocacy activities may be helpful especially if they are heterosexual. Heterosexual allies play an important role in advocacy for gay marriage. Similar to people who were white advocating for equal rights for people who were black during the civil rights movement, heterosexuals can have a strong influence on attitudes about gay marriage.

## **Directions for Future Research**

My research suggests that attitudes toward familial gender roles impacts attitudes about gay marriage. My research should be replicated using longitudinal analysis such as the GSS on attitudes toward familial gender roles and their impact on attitudes about gay marriage. For example, future research can use the GSS to compare changes in attitudes about gay marriage from 2006 to 2010. This would be important to know especially if attitudes have become more positive over time. Letting the public know that gay marriage is more socially accepted can influence others who may be afraid to acknowledge their acceptance of gay marriage to become more open about their beliefs.

In addition, a future survey designed and implemented for individual religious organizations could be helpful in understanding which specific beliefs about gay marriage have an impact on attitude formation. This survey can target which areas specifically need addressed within individual religious organizations. Educational materials can be provided about the specific areas that need addressed. Specialists from professional fields who work closely with gay families can provide information and facts about the realities of day-to-day lives of gay families. Specifically, gay families need the benefits of legalized marriage in the United States.

Research on moderate and liberal attitudes about gender roles can potentially improve attitudes about gay marriage because attitudes toward familial gender roles are transforming. More research on the impact of attitudes toward familial gender roles specific to marriage laws and policies could encourage activists, educators and public policy analysts to support the legalization of gay marriage so families are safe and



protected. Research that demonstrates the struggles of gay families and the experiences of gay families can inform the public about the need for safety measures for all families regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. In addition, the review of current literature in my study showed there is a need for more research on non-traditional families to provide understanding and knowledge about non-traditional families. Instead of criticizing non-traditional families, there is a need to support non-traditional families. If the United States is a civil society, it is important to protect those who have less than others. Perhaps more qualitative research can show lived experiences of non-traditional parents to illustrate the kinds of relationships that exist within non-traditional families so the public understands that financial and political resources are needed to help those families who are less fortunate.

A larger operational measure of attitudes toward familial gender roles could be useful to understanding more dynamics on attitudes about gay marriage relative to attitude formation of gender roles. My measure is based on three statements on attitudes toward familial gender roles and expanding beyond three statements may shed light on other dynamics of familial gender roles related to attitudes about gay marriage. The *Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale* (ATSM) is a new instrument designed to measure attitudes toward same-sex marriage. The ATSM scale consists of 17 items, has a one-dimensional factor structure, and exhibits a high degree of reliability (Pearl & Galupo, 2007). This scale is different from the one-item measure used in the GSS from my study. The ATSM scale may be useful for gaining information from church groups, community groups, college students, and human resource agencies to

provide information on why some groups of people support or deny gay marriage based on various aspects of gay marriage. This information can support activities to positively influence attitudes about gay marriage by knowing who, what, where, and how to change attitudes.

My study indicates that religiosity was related to more negative attitudes about gay marriage. Additional research on aspects of moderate religiosity may provide additional insight on attitudes about gay marriage. People who are moderate may be influenced to support gay marriage by providing by providing educational materials, open discussion about gay families, factual information from professionals who work with gay families, or training events. The larger organization may be concerned about losing individual members or may believe supporting gay marriage is a fair and just treatment of all kinds of families. Since there has been friction between churches about gay marriage, and noticeable changes of attitudes with some individual churches breaking away from larger organizations because of gay marriage, it may be wise for larger organizations to listen and understand individual beliefs within their organization. If research can impact individuals within larger institutions, some institutional change may support the legalization of gay marriage.

Studies should be conducted within individual religious denominations to investigate the level of support, as well as why there is level of support or lack of support for gay marriage. Specific surveys about gay marriage should be targeted at moderate religious affiliations and to individuals within religious groups to encourage moderates to legalize gay marriage.

We can further our understanding on attitudes about gay marriage by conducting research on political affiliation, socioeconomic status, and regional location relative to attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. These factors may influence attitudes about gay marriage relative to attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. This is important to understand so advocates know how and why political affiliation, socioeconomic status, and regional location may impact attitudes about gay marriage so these demographics can be challenged, addressed, and targeted with educational materials, training events, and media messages in an attempt to change negative attitudes about gay marriage.

In summary, the purpose of my study was to examine attitudes about gay marriage as they relate to attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. I used the 2006 GSS of 1,977 adults living in the United States. My study found that people with traditional attitudes toward familial gender roles have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. In addition, people with strong religious affiliation compared to people with not very strong religious affiliation, people who attended religious services more often, and people who were very religious compared to people who were not very religious have more negative attitudes about gay marriage. In contrast, people who were slightly religious and not religious compared to people who were not very religious have more positive attitudes about gay marriage and people who were very spiritual compared to people who were not very spiritual have more positive attitudes about gay marriage. Furthermore, specific religious affiliations, namely the Southern Baptist Convention, Other Baptists, members of the Lutheran Missouri Synod, Other Protestants, and non-

denominational Protestants have more negative attitudes about gay marriage while Interdenominational Protestants, Reform Jews, and Other Jews have more positive attitudes about gay marriage compared to Catholics. Similar to other research on attitudes about gay marriage, my study found that women, never married and divorced or separated adults, and more educated adults have more positive attitudes about gay marriage. Conversely, older adults, non-Hispanic black adults, and less educated adults have more negative attitudes about gay marriage.

Overall, the findings of my study contribute to and extend the literature on attitudes about gay marriage relative to attitudes toward familial gender roles and religiosity. Most notably, individual religious affiliations have an impact on attitudes about gay marriage that differ from large religious affiliations. Activists, advocates, policy-makers, and educators working to legalize gay marriage may benefit from my research by using resources that target individual religious affiliations to increase positive attitudes about gay marriage.

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