Resistance to Hegemonic Sexuality:
Alternative Perspectives on Same-Sex Marriage and Mainstream LGBT Activist Organizations in the United States

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Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of the discourse produced on the issue of same-sex marriage within academia and LGBT activist organizations. I analyze the discourse produced by the organizations GLAD and The Freedom to Marry Coalition from the New England region of the United States. I argue that a different approach than the ones used by these organizations, which see same-sex marriage as central issue, is necessary for achieving recognition, civil rights, and financial security for LGBT collectives in the United States. I begin by showing that the political struggles that identity-based movements undertake shape and are shaped by processes through which these groups identify themselves. I then show that struggles for recognition and redistribution through obtaining citizenship rights are inextricably linked. Therefore, I claim that identity-based movements, in the context of a liberal, capitalist society, that fail to thoroughly address both struggles run the risk of marginalizing the specific needs of certain groups that exists within these movements. Finally, I argue that the authors of the text "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" have articulated the principles for this alternative approach. These principles, which fight for the legal recognition and financial support for the various types of families and relationships that exist aside from heterosexual or same-sex coupledoms, provide a more desirable long-term strategy for resisting systems based on required forms of hegemonic sexuality.

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Introduction

On November 18, 2003, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in the case of *Goodridge vs. the Department of Public Health* that gays and lesbians have the right to marry.[1] The initial plaintiffs of this court case, Hillary and Julie Goodridge, were joined by twelve other individuals on April 11, 2001 in an attempt to challenge the refusal of the Department of Public Health of Massachusetts to provide marriage licenses to them in their respective city or town clerk's offices.[2] The lawyers that represented these couples are part of the legal staff of the non-profit organization GLAD, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders. GLAD is one of several non-profit organizations, others include MassEquality and The Freedom to Marry Coalition of Massachusetts, that work to achieve and maintain legal rights for and prevent discrimination against gays and lesbians in Massachusetts and the surrounding New England region of the U.S.

The work of these organizations has been crucial for the development and apparent success of LGBT politics in the region. In terms of the same-sex marriage debate, the agenda to achieve equal rights via the institution of marriage is making headway and some are benefiting from these achievements. Since the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2003, more than 8,000 same-sex couples have been married in the state of Massachusetts.[3] Yet, this breakthrough for those who aspire to achieve the same legal rights for LGBT peoples throughout the nation is simply a stepping-stone in the long-term struggle. This struggle has been made more difficult considering that 45 states have either constitutional amendments or

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[1] Case documents, court decisions, and a list of other relevant documents related to the case can be found on the GLAD website at http://www.glad.org/marriage/. Last accessed May 31, 2007.

[2] This specific case related information can be found on the hyperlink http://www.glad.org/marriage/Goodridge/goodridge_background.shtml of GLAD's website. Last accessed May 31, 2007.

[3] This statistic is taken from the article by Dan Ring entitled "8,100 Gay, Lesbian Couples Marry after 2004 Decision" from the *Springfield Republican*, May 16, 2006, which is available at the hyperlink http://massequality.org/news/news_story.php?id=273. These statistics were taken from the Department of Public Health of Massachusetts. Last accessed May 31, 2007.

laws that restrict marriage to a man and a woman and in 17 of these states the laws include some terms that restrict, or potentially restrict, unions and domestic partnerships to the same definition.[4] Aside from the dissonant conservative outcry about the right of same-sex couples to marry, others within the LGBT community have raised consternation and doubts about the long-term viability of focusing on the right to marry as a means for obtaining social and cultural acceptance and economic stability for the many types of LGBT relationships and families that exist today.[5]

The debate and controversy to which I am referring has existed within leftist political movements for decades.[6] However, I would argue that more recent debates have been framed in a way that those who find themselves hesitant to embrace the institution of marriage are left with the absurd ultimatum "[E]ither you're with us or against us" in the battle for same-sex marriage rights. Intra-community debates have existed since the 1970s and questioned the move to embrace already problematic institutions such as marriage, are often sidelined in the larger context of mainstream politics, media, and activism. Hull writes that "[A] casual observer of recent media coverage of same-sex marriage developments might easily get the impression that all gays and lesbians [...] are enthusiastic proponents of marriage in both its cultural and legal forms." (2006: 78) The situation, she points out, is much more complex and "deeper tensions and oppositions within gay and lesbian communities" have existed for years. (2006: 78) Steven Seidman similarly argues that "[N]otwithstanding a brief moment when a liberationist politics flourished in the early 1970s, the gay movement has pursued a politics of citizenship aimed at civic inclusion by means of

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[4] Statistics on same-sex marriage bans were taken from the Human Rights Campaign website from the hyperlink http://hrc.org/Template.cfm?Section=Center&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=63&ContentID=17353#textlinks. Last accessed May 31, 2007.
[5] The website http://www.beyondmarriage.org presents a statement composed by 20 LGBT and queer activists, scholars, etc., which contains these sentiments. Since its creation, this manifesto has been signed by many other concerned scholars, activists, writers, and educators among others.
[6] Michael Warner refers to the radical movements of the 1970s in relation to marriage in *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. (2000: 87) Gary Lehring also refers to the gay liberation movement's positions on the issue of same-sex marriage in the 1970s. (Lehring in Phelan, 1997)

gaining equal rights and normalizing or purifying a gay identity." (2001: 321) To these claims, the general question then arises as to what is lost in the debate that Hull describes as "highly polarized"; one reduced to "marriage vs. no marriage", and disregards the LGBT voices with sincere concerns about the over-centralization of the struggle for same-sex marriage rights. (2006: 153)

In this paper, I intend to examine how this debate is being framed within some LGBT activist organizations. This query has led me to address other questions such as how these identity-based organizations conceptualize issues of redistribution and recognition in relation to their groups' own formation and to their struggles to achieve citizenship rights. For example: How do these groups of activists conceive their own position within the intra-community debate and how much consideration is taken of the heterogeneity of concerns and needs within the LGBT community? To what extent do dominant activist groups incorporate the criticisms of less visible activists into their strategies? What position do issues of material redistribution have within the processes of prioritizing certain issues over others? Finally, to what extent can those within LGBT activism who prioritize the battle for same-sex marriage rights subvert normative regulations and conceptions of sexuality? The answers to these questions are important for knowing how and for whom LGBT activist organizations work, and whether or not the strategies these organizations embrace fulfill the promises they make.

I develop some responses to these questions in three chapters. In chapter one, I begin by introducing the theoretical concepts that I use to frame my examination of this political debate. The question of same-sex marriage, I argue, revolves around issues of how political struggles for citizenship rights that identity-based movements undertake shape and are shaped by processes through which these groups identify themselves. I try to show how struggles for recognition and redistribution through obtaining these rights are inextricably linked. In the third section of the chapter, I then argue how the liberal context and framework that LGBT

organizations work with can be problematic since issues of structurally instituted economic inequalities are often overlooked. After setting the conceptual framework, I produce a brief outline of the LGBT intra-community debate in the last section of this chapter and argue that the validity and relevance of the concerns raised about prioritizing marriage as a means for achieving equality make the struggle of those who focus on same-sex marriage problematic.

In chapter two, I analyze the discursive practices of the organizations GLAD and The Freedom to Marry Coalition. As I previously stated, it is appropriate to look towards the New England region where so many developments have recently occurred in order to discover how some of the most active advocates, such as the aforementioned ones, are constructing their own agendas around the issue. The fact that these non-profit organizations have played such a substantial role in putting the issue of same-sex marriage rights to the forefront of the public debate and policy making, justifies their importance as foci for my inquiry. In order to be able to perform an analysis of these discursive practices, I refer to the currently maintained websites where each organization's mission statements, background information, and organizational activities are posted.

The availability of these websites enables me to conduct a discourse analysis on the texts through which these organizations produce and present the framework of their own participation in LGBT political activism. In this sense, I use the definition of discourse developed by Norman Fairclough to be "elements of social events" and "interactive processes of meaning-making". (Fairclough, 2003: 10) Uncovering the processes of meaning-making here consists of exposing what is explicit in a text as well as what is implicit and analyzing it in relation to the context in which it is produced. (Fairclough, 2003: 11) In other words, it is necessary to "explore the reasons for choosing particular discourses, to understand the ideological investments of users in one linguistic form rather than another, […] [to] explore the assumptions, the presuppositions that go without explicit verbalization but without which

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no statement could be enunciated and to explore the potential consequences, the direction where the dominant logic that informs the particular statement should pull the trajectory of the propositions."[7] With this approach, I am better able to understand the possible social, ideological and material effects produced by the discursive practices of these organizations.

In chapter three, I continue my analysis of the discourses produced by two other approaches on the issue of same-sex marriage that argue for the de-privileging of marriage as the only site in which special rights and benefits are extended to particular types of relationships and families. I intend to show that the approaches and discourse developed on the websites maintained by the "Alternatives to Marriage Project" and www.beyondmarriage.org provide alternative and more flexible frameworks in which citizenship rights can be distributed to the many different types of families and relationships that exist in society today.

In the conclusion of this thesis, I revisit what I the main concepts involved in this debate on same-sex marriage and address the importance of the social, economic, and political context in which this debate has developed. I intend to prove that the identification processes through which identity-based groups constitute themselves influence and are influenced by the ways in which they struggle for citizenship rights. I attempt to show that issues of redistribution and recognition are intrinsically connected in the struggle for equality. Therefore, organizations that undertake such struggles on the basis of identity must consider the ways in which their own movements are formed and whether or not the differences (sexuality, race, class) that exist within their own identity-based movements are overlooked and, if so, the consequences that follow. In my conclusion, I intend to prove my hypothesis that LGBT activist organizations with liberal approaches to obtaining citizenship rights

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[7] This quote comes from a copy of the unpublished paper presented by Erzsébet Barát, provided to me courtesy of the author, entitled "How to identify and critically analyze the distinctive aspect of power, namely its conceptual practices of knowledge production?"; presented at the symposium, "Gender, Empire, and the Politics of Central and Eastern Europe", held at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary May 17-18, 2007.

and/or normalizing approaches that prioritize the same-sex marriage as the only or most important framework for achieving social equality are undesirable for a long-term strategy. As an alternative, I hope to show that other approaches, such as the fight for the recognition and financial security of all types of families and relationships, have been developed which provide a more useful framework for these struggles.

Chapter 1: Sexual Citizenship as Status and Practice

1.1 Sexual Citizenship and the Process of Identification

In my understanding, it is important to see marriage not only as an important institution through which certain set of rights, and thereby the very status of sexual citizen is delivered to particular groups of people, but also as a site of struggle for defining the actual conditions of entitlement to those rights. This entails a redefinition of citizenship itself, which I find in Isin and Wood's reconceptualization. They define it as "not only a set of legal obligations and entitlements which individuals possess by virtue of their membership in a state, but also the practices through which individuals and groups formulate and claim new rights or struggle to expand or maintain existing rights." (1999: 4) Citizenship, in this sense, is conceived not only as a fixed or stable status, but also as a process always in the course of being constituted and contested. Isin and Wood go on and clarify the political dimension of struggles over citizenship in modern times and state that "despite modern, universalistic rhetoric, [it] has always been a group concept – but [it] *has never been expanded to all members of any polity*." (1999: 20, author's emphasis) In other words, citizenship has functioned as a central site of struggle over defining who comes to be deemed as members *and* non-members of a polity. This is why we can say that, for example, the formation of LGBT collective identities around the issue of marriage can be seen as claims for recognition of citizenship rights. Marriage exists as a site through which legal obligations and entitlements are extended to non-heterosexual members of the given polity. Therefore, the struggle for same-sex marriage is an exercise of citizenship in that certain groups attempt to expand and transform this institution in order to gain the privileges that are distributed through the inclusion in it.

It is necessary then to explore further how to see the 'identity' of these groups in relation to their struggles for the particular rights. Drawing on Stuart Hall, Isin and Wood

argue that the process of "identification" in late modern times produces identities that "are fragmented and fractured, never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices, and positions". (Hall, 1996 cited in Isin and Wood, 1999: 16) It is clear that making claims to citizenship rights based on the grounds of identity is complicated and not without its problems. In defining this process further, Isin and Wood argue that "groups do not form out of individual properties and attributes that pre-exist groups. On the contrary, individual attributes can only form via the group." (1999: 20) This formation 'via the group' then means through the participation in a particular struggle, in this case the one over the extension of citizenship.

When discussing the source of this multiplicity and fragmentation of identity, Isin and Wood also underscore that when we argue that in the course of their participation in the struggle groups are formed in relation to other groups this entails that their identity is formed as affects of differential power relations and interests of all participants, as "targets of assistance, hatred, animosity, sympathy or allegiance." (1999: 20) For the LGBT community, when struggling to end discrimination and exclusion from rights which are defined in terms of non/legitimate sexual identity, the problem then should arise as to how to negotiate their sexual identity already ascribed to them through the exclusionary labeling and how to redefine it in relation to this multi-dimensional identification process that is involved in the struggle for inclusion in citizenship. Following Harding's formulation, we can argue that what is at stake at these citizenship struggles in terms of the identities that emerge is to understand that some identities are "ascribed – given to us by others, without our consent" and others are "achieved [on our own terms as] the result of struggles to discover and create shared histories and visions" (1999: 254) There are a myriad of intersections of sexual, class, race, and ethnic identities that are in constant dialogue with one another within LGBT movements. Depending on the recognition of these differences, their mode of negotiation,

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and the space in which the participants can maneuver the identities that emerge are eventually shaped by the very way these political movements develop.

This interrelationship between citizenship and identity is made even more complex when examined in terms of the issue of space. Isin and Wood expand their discussion of citizenship in this regard and emphasize the importance of integrating space into the discussion of citizenship, I would argue, in order to be able to have the theoretical space in their model for the inclusion of multiplicity of the emerging identities in the political struggle. They define space as "[social] locations from which people exercise their citizenship rights". (1999: viii) For understanding sexuality as *the* stake in LGBT fights for citizenship, space means the location from where "the right to participate in public processes *as a sexual person*" is made legitimate. (1999: 85)

Bringing sexuality to the forefront of the political process also destabilizes then the binary opposition of public/private spaces that is normally applied in arguments around the political sphere. However, Bell and Binnie warn us that this destabilization is not inherently a favorable gain. In their view, this "opening up or offering up the private as a space for a politics of citizenship can render it vulnerable to other unintended forms of political interrogation and intervention." (2000: 31-32) The need for recognition also comes with the potential cost of increased intervention of the state power into the relative shelter of the private sphere. For LGBT movements, the need to negotiate these terms cause much tension and require much vigilance in order not to make themselves even more vulnerable to unwanted penetration into the relative freedom that the right to privacy may otherwise deliver to them.

Through this discussion thus far, it may seem as though this struggle for rights is one solely based in the accumulation of recognition. However, with further investigation into the

relationship between struggles for recognition and redistribution, it becomes more apparent that they influence and mutually constitute one another.

1.2 Redistribution and Recognition in the Struggles for Citizenship Rights

Isin and Wood develop their claims about the relationship between social groups and their struggles for rights with the help of the insights developed by Pierre Bourdieu. They write that "for Bourdieu classification struggles [struggle for recognition] (in which different groups argue for and against the existence of certain groups in society) and class struggles [struggles for redistribution] (in which individuals and groups struggle for the material and ideal interests) reinforce and condition each other." (1999: 37) Isin and Wood present Bourdieu's conceptualization of group identity and his discussion of the four forms of capital as the basis on which they can make the argument that the distinction between "cultural and economic struggles or between struggles for recognition and redistribution" becomes unnecessary. (1999: 41) Bourdieu claims that any one form of capital (symbolic, economic, cultural, and social) can be converted into the other type of capital and what matters then in social struggles is that these varying forms should be appropriated as a resource in a particular field. (1999: 40-41) Struggles are as much dependent on financial resources as they are the means to be socially and culturally recognized. Consequently, sexual citizenship is not reducible to 'only' a form of cultural citizenship, which is the dominant understanding in feminist cultural studies[8]. To put it another way, struggles must not only focus on the aim of recognition. In this line of thought, group formations can be understood as constituted through their struggles for recognition *and* redistribution at the same time.

[8] See for example Liesbet Van Zoonen's conceptualization of cultural citizenship when arguing against the feminization of popular culture by trying to expose the overlap between the activities participation in politics and in watching soap operas takes. In the chapter entitled "Connections: The Fan Democracy" from Van Zoonen's book *Entertaining the Citizen: When Politics and Popular Culture Converge*. Lanham: MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2005.

Finally, as for the process of group formation is concerned, Isin and Wood also emphasize the materiality of this process. They write that "individual attributes [that are discursively enunciated] can only form under material constraints." (1999: 20) The importance of the material aspects of representation in identity formation is also raised by Bell and Binnie in their discussion of social theory and its relation to cultural politics of representation. Since my project is predominantly concerned with the exploration of the discursive resources the various LGBT texts on the Internet sites draw on, it is important for me to address the materiality of these symbolic resources.

Isin and Woods, using Dyer's argument that "representations and social power are inextricably linked, and that modes of representation are both informed by and themselves inform the ways in which groups are treated in real life" (Dyer cited in Bell and Binnie, 2000: 70), write that "to argue that sexual identities are the product of discourse does not mean that this does not have material consequences." (2000: 70) In other words, ways of signification are also shaped by and shape the material conditions of social existence. Relying on the work of Rosemary Hennessy, Barát writes that discourse must be understood as "an ideological social practice where categories or concepts 'never assert their meaningfulness in and of themselves' but function 'as a particular way of making sense of [the signified]' and thereby bring about or 'define a particular set of social arrangements.'"[9] Combining these important points, the distinction between recognition and redistribution in relation to group identification and claims to citizenship rights becomes obsolete. Therefore, an analysis of the discourse through which these groups articulate their own existence and the struggles they undertake enables me to understand the material implications of how these groups are formed through practices of signification.

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[9] I am quoting Barát again from the copy of the unpublished manuscript of her speech presented at the symposium, "Gender, Empire, and the Politics of Central and Eastern Europe", held at the Central European University, Budapest, Hungary May 17-18, 2007.

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1.3 Liberalism in Late-Modern Capitalist Society as a Context

As I have been arguing, it is important to understand how the concepts citizenship and identity are conceived of within political struggles. It is equally important to examine in what ways political activist groups then approach these concepts. Like many political organizations in North America that base their agenda on achieving legal rights, the LGBT organizations that I analyze in this project, I will argue, take a liberal approach towards political engagement regarding their agenda and their strategy of participation; the way they conduct their own political activism.

"Liberalism denotes those theories that consider the individual as preceding polity and citizenship as specific rights that protect the individual. The bearer of rights is [the] individual and the granter is the nation-state." (Isin and Wood, 1999: 7) Under this liberal line of thinking, the simplified relationship of the individual to the state does not capture the complex ways in which power is exercised. This approach assumes that as long as individuals are given the same rights, they exist on an equal playing field where it is just a matter of choosing whether to exercise these rights or not. The individual appears completely autonomous and, consequently, becomes the sole responsible party in relation to her/his position in society. This apparent celebration of the individual in the current political climate in the United States is a dangerous ideological move. As Berlant observes, there is a tendency in the U.S. to try to separate issues of economic conditions and subjectivity. (1997: 9) The result is the danger of "overvalorizing" individual will as though personal willpower alone would be enough to make "market democracy" deliver its "promise". (1997: 9) If the promise is not fulfilled then failure is to be attributed to the flaws or shortcomings of the individual.

Relying on the writings of Foucault, Isin and Wood argue that the simplicity of this understanding does not do justice to the complex ways in which individuals function in society in relation to power. (1999: 143-145) They do not only see liberalism as a philosophy

but also as a political practice. They refer to Michel Foucault's argument among others that emphasizes that liberalism as practice is in fact an embodiment of "various technologies of government." (1999: 143) Individual liberty according to this conceptualization is not understood to be natural any more but a product of "government" practices. (1999: 144) Government, in this sense, is not reduced to the regime in power or even the actual institutions of government, but it means the "rules and principles that regulate a household, neighborhood, municipality or state." (1999: 144) Rather than seeing the individual as all-powerful and autonomous creator of her/his own life in relation to the state, this explanation argues for a more complex understanding of the interaction between individual and different technologies of power that are dispersed in all field of her/his daily activities.

The question of how to understand the autonomy or agency of the subject is especially relevant then for understanding the ways in which an identity-based movement is developed. As Harding observes, "[b]oth individual and collective identities are constructed, though only through complex social negotiations and never as a matter of completely free individual choice." (2006: 254) Similar to Isin and Wood's rereading of Hall, Harding also emphasizes the continuous, dynamic processes of identification, which cannot be reduced to a simple matter of individual choice as with the liberal approach to identity formation within political movements. A liberal approach disregards the dynamics of the intersubjective processes of negotiation and the contingent effects that they produce. It cannot explain social change beyond the will of a particular will, and, therefore, identities and identity-based movements will not be seen as emergent categories in specific historical and social contexts, which are formed through complex social interactions within specific locations of power.

In order to understand the debate in the LGBT movements that has evolved around the issue of same-sex marriage, it is necessary to understand the complicated processes of identification that occur in the formation of the movement and then to examine how and for

whom these identities come to be mobilized. In the rest of my paper, therefore, I will address the debate *within* the LGBT community in order to explore the complex process of identity formation, to see what the identity of lesbian or gay comes to mean according to the various logics informing the discursively mediated position of the participants.

1.4 The Intra-community Debate on Same-Sex Marriage

In the debate on the legalization of gay and lesbian marriages in the United States, one of the central questions that arises is concerned with the impact the inclusion of gays and lesbians in the institution of marriage may have on the institution itself and the subsequent meanings of citizenship and rights. In order to address this question and form my own position, I will explore the arguments in the debate between those that claim that gay and lesbian marriage will create little or no change on the negative aspects and implications of the institution of marriage and those that argue for this inclusion because they believe it can destabilize hegemonic sexualities and concepts of citizenship and legal rights.

For feminists, gays, and lesbians who are against the recognition of same-sex marriage as a dominant framework in which to achieve equality, there are fears about the appropriating power of marriage as a means for governments to monitor and control sexuality. (Ettelbrick, 1989; Card, 1996; Warner, 1999a and 1999b; Clarke, 2003) They in part repeat already established long-term concerns that see marriage as an inherently heterosexist institution based on hegemonic norms and values of sexuality and relationships in general. They also voice new concerns when they see obtaining the specific right to marriage as a move that could potentially thwart the momentum of a broader struggle for recognition and acceptance of gays and lesbians in society *as they are*, without wanting to be "like them" (Ettelbrick, 1989; Warner, 1999a and 1999b; Polikoff, 2003). These opponents also claim that the legalization of same-sex marriage will further marginalize those gays and

lesbians that still chose - for various reasons - not to participate in the institution. Once successful, the concerns of these non-married gays and lesbians would then be marginalized with the complicity of the "normalized" part of the LGBT movement. (Ettelbrick, 1989; Warner, 1999a and 1999b; Clarke, 2003; Auchmuty, 2004).

Michael Warner argues that many in the gay and lesbian community have forgotten earlier criticisms of the marriage institution. (Warner, 1999a) For example, he quotes the aims of the National Coalition of Gay Organizations in 1972 that "called for the 'repeal of all legislative provisions that restrict the sex or number of persons entering into a marriage unit and extension of legal benefits of marriage to all persons who cohabitate regardless of sex or numbers'" and "demanded 'elimination of tax inequalities victimizing single persons and same-sex couples'". (Warner, 1999a: 90) He argues that conservative gay and lesbian voices have taken the foreground in the fight for gay marriage, excluding other dissenters, and that a policy of normalization will not better the situation for gays and lesbians in the long run. (Warner, 1999a and 1999b) He claims that, in fact, these policies of inclusion and for rights to marry would create "good gays – the kind who would not challenge the norms of straight culture, who would not flaunt sexuality, and who would not insist on living differently than ordinary folk" and "Bad queers, the kind who has sex, who talks about it, and who builds with other queers a way of life that ordinary folk do not understand or control" (Warner, 1999a: 113-114)

Framing the question of exclusion within the gay and lesbian community achieved through the concept of sexual citizenship, authors David Bell and Jon Binnie claim that a move for marriage rights can have "*reaffirming*" affects that would categorize citizens into a hierarchical "two-tier" system of those who marry and those who do not, "maintain[ing] the (long-term, monogamous) coupledom as the most legitimate form of lovelife-choice" (Card

cited in Bell and Binnie, 2000: 58), and "liberalize[ing] the institution of marriage". (Bell and Binnie, 2000: 58), and, in this sense, makes it look as if it were a matter of individual choice.

Ettelbrick raises a similar argument in relation to the dichotomization, or rather the antagonization, of LGBT people into married and unmarried 'camps' and also expresses her concern about the types of relationships that will be considered more acceptable. She writes that "the elevation of married relationships" may further eclipse or devalue "other relationships of choice". (Ettelbrick in Sullivan, 1997: 121)

In considering how class, race, and gender intersect with one another in the management of marriage rights activism, Bell and Binnie cite Eva Pendleton's claim that "the main proponents of same-sex marriage in the USA are dual-income, middle-class white gay men." (Bell and Binnie, 2000: 60) Behind this statement, there is the serious question of for whom this legal gain will benefit. The accusation of elitism has been echoed by other participants within this debate. (Ettelbrick: 1989)

In reference to these claims, however, I would argue that it is less important who is behind the movement than the concepts, the discourse, and the interests those concepts and discourses are informed by and will promote. It is more useful to understand how these groups frame the debate and how these techniques recognize and privilege certain individuals more than others and to ask to what extent they can marginalize other groups and individuals. Ettelbrick, for example, claims that more socially marginalized peoples within the LGBT community would find the issue of marriage less relevant in light of more important concerns around obtaining affordable decent paying jobs and affordable health care. (Ettelbrick in Sullivan, 1997: 122) The question to ask is then do LGBT movements address these constituencies within the framework of their political struggles and, if so, how.

As far as the pro-marriage arguments are concerned, they claim that it is possible that same-sex marriage will have some transformative effect on marriage. Some gay and lesbian

activists argue that the inclusion of non-heterosexuals is a step in a positive direction and that it can be a location for resisting and changing the social and legal inequalities imposed on gays and lesbians. For some, theories on power and resistance based on the writings of Michel Foucault create the foundation for such claims. If power is at once diffused and ubiquitous, and if resistance is inherently contained within this power as described by Foucault (1990), then the struggle for marriage may contain possibilities for subversion. Writers, such as William Eskridge, belong in the group of scholars who argue for the subversion of marriage through gay marriage itself. Eskridge makes the claim that the normalization of homosexuality will result in the de-normalization of marriage itself. (cited in Clarke, 2003: 527) He simply reverses the existing status quo and 'conveniently' disregards the fact that the relation of LGBT collectives to marriage is not symmetrical relative to heterosexuals or to different groups within the movement. Furthermore, there is also the question of how much resistance this strategy can produce.

For others, achieving rights to same-sex marriage is a way in which gays and lesbians can prove their 'normality' in relation to the heterosexual majority. (Sullivan in Sullivan, 1997; Wolfson in Sullivan, 1997) Wolfson hopes to prove this by claiming, for example, that "all available evidence suggests that the vast majority of gay and non-gay people alike share such sentiments." (Wolfson in Sullivan, 1997:142) That is, that they want not only to get married but also to have kids. The 'evidence' he refers to is a poll taken by the *Advocate* in 1994, which shows that 85% of those who responded said that they would want to or possibly would get married if they had the right to do so. (Wolfson in Sullivan, 1997: 142) The weakness of this argument may lie in the strength of its own evidence. The paradox of Wolfson's claim exists in his reliance on the logic of majoritarianism in order to prove the 'normality' of the gays and lesbians. This same logic is used in homophobic arguments to disprove the normality of gays and lesbians in relation to the heterosexual population. I

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would also argue that translating the desires of an entire diverse community of LGBT people from the numbers of a single poll is, to say the least, "stretching it".

Sullivan takes the notion of normality even further and claims that the inclusion of gays and lesbians into the institution may actually help to "buttress the ethic of heterosexual marriage". (Sullivan in Sullivan, 1997: 154) The ethic to which he is referring includes 'values' such as fidelity and monogamy. (Sullivan in Sullivan, 1997: 149) Both of these majoritarian, normative positions seem to have no qualms in reinforcing hegemonic notions of family and relationships, without ever questioning the ideological work those very values of 'fidelity' and 'monogamy' are expected to carry out. All they do is argue for the inclusion of gays and lesbians, specifically the ones that (are willing to) practice normal types of families and relationships.

In order to expose the conservativeness of the pro-marriage position, I turn to Michael Warner and Laura Berlant's work in which they discuss how deeply entrenched sexuality (heterosexuality) is in the concept of citizenship in America. They write that "[N]ational heterosexuality is the mechanism by which a core national culture can be imagined as a sanitized space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behavior, a space of pure citizenship." (Berlant and Warner, 2005: 189) This observation opens up a critical perspective on claims such as the valorization of monogamy and fidelity as developed by Wolfson who writes that "[I]nclusion at the level of marriage is uniquely revolutionary, conservatively subversive, singularly faithful to true American and family values in a way that few, if any, other gay and lesbian victories would be." (quoted in Hull, 2006: 80)

Berlant and Warner also argues that it would be equally a mistake to assume that heterosexual culture is one monolithic entity that dictates and produces homogeneous institutions and ideals of heteronormativity. Based on a Foucauldian understanding, they claim that heteronormativity is a fragile, contingent set of alliances, "involving dispersed and

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contradictory strategies for self-maintenance and reproduction. (Berlant and Warner, 2005: 192) Heteronormativity, as a powerful political and social force, is diffuse and exercised through different systems and structures of social life such as "nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; education; plus the convention and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture." (Berlant and Warner, 2005: 194) From this perspective, it appears that there *is* a possibility for resistance within the existing institution of marriage. However, it is not the *only* site of political power and, therefore, should not be the *only* site of resistance.

1.5 The Merits of Self-Reflexivity in Activism

The fears among groups that are concerned with ending the hegemonic heterosexist ideology show that the issue of marriage is not so simple and that proponents of same-sex marriage must carefully consider the implications of their fight for the right to participate in the institution. The trouble is not with the individuals who desire to obtain such status, recognition, and legal security. The dilemma concerns the construction of the institution itself and its functions to privilege and normalize, heterosexist values. Therefore, I would argue that it is necessary for activists and LGBT organizations to find a less normalizing approach. A long-term struggle for social and economic equality should take into account the structural positioning of marital status and how it frames the ways in which some are privileged over others. These organizations must reflect on how they frame their own constituencies and how this may or may not exclude certain issues and, in turn, individuals from the scope of their agendas. With these concerns in mind, I begin the task of presenting my own analysis of certain LGBT organizations' discursive practices as published on the internet in order to see if and to what extent these organizations are reflecting on the issues under such a self-reflexive frame.

Chapter 2: The Activists for Same-Sex Marriage

2.1 Internet as a Means

For all of these LGBT organizations, the Internet has become a means to rally financial and political support and to relay their political message to a larger constituency. This (not so) new form of mass media has become an increasingly accessible site of political, commercial, social, and cultural interaction for millions of users from around the world. As a form of mass media used for political purposes, it is important to note how the Internet functions as a site of contact between individuals, groups, and texts. Smith's theorization of "textually mediated discourse" is helpful for clarifying the complexities of this site of interaction. Smith argues that "mass media do not stand in uniform relation to their 'audience'" and that these mass media are used within "widely varying social relations". (1995: 162) As conveyors of discourse, mass media play a pivotal role in framing how a message is mediated between the different audiences.

I am using discourse, in this sense, as the process *and* the product of meaning-making. As Smith puts it, discourse is a complex field of varying social relations that are mediated by text. (1995: 161) The subjects within this process are a product of and agents within this complex dialectal relationship with the text. Smith stresses that the effects of mass media can be located in the ways they connect local and global subjects by orienting people from distance locations onto the same text. (1995: 168) Again, the Internet must be understood as embedded within a field of social relations. It is a site in which individuals from around the world interact to create, recreate, and transmit texts along with author audio-visual images. Texts are, therefore, social events where different meanings, discourse, and subjectivities arise. As the Internet grows and becomes more available, it has presented some new possibilities in the production of varying discourses as well as new problems as a potential site of political exchange and change. The Internet has mostly been embraced as a site in

which political boundaries have been defied. (Isin and Wood, 1999: 109) However, this claim has been problematized by those who point to the material resources that are necessary for using the Internet and to the potentially undemocratic practices that arise through its use.

Isin & Wood are one of those who are critical of this alleged potential. Due to the "volume of social and cultural capital that one requires to 'get wired'", they argue that there should be discretion involved in assessing its subversiveness. (1999: 110) Even if it can be noted that the amount of users since the time of publication for Isin and Wood's work has increased from "only about 35 millions of users" (1999: 110) to about 1.1 billion users, which is a 200% growth in the past 7 years[10], this statistic alone does not disqualify their argument that much social and cultural capital is necessary to freely and easily access the Internet.

Isin and Wood's second point about the locationality of the Internet must still be considered since Europe and North America make up 50% of the Internet user population in the world and "penetration rates" for these regions are 69.7% and 38.9% respectively as opposed to other regions that range from about 17% to 3% of the regional population. On this basis, they come to the conclusion that the Internet is an "exclusive domain of an educated segment of the population in the most advanced countries". (1999: 109) I would extend their reservation about the importance of location within the highly wired countries themselves. For example, in the regions of the U.S. with higher income and standards of living, like the East Coast, there may be a disproportionate amount of availability and usage.

Another important issue that Isin and Wood discuss is the quickly expanding commercialization of the Internet that raises, to me, further questions about the unequal position within the class of "the wired". (1999: 110) If those who control the "production, consumption, and distribution of the symbolic signs" in the world are the same classes or groups that dominate the Internet (Isin & Wood, 1999: 110), then one must be skeptical about

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[10] All statistics about Internet usage are taken from website http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm which is maintained by the Miniwatts Marketing Group. This site was last accessed on April 24, 2007.

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the potential of political subversion through/within this so-called "democratic" space. Here, I want to stress the importance of examining the discursive practices within political mobilization as they are developed within cyberspace in order to see how those who are more visible use this space. For this investigation of LGBT activism, these quantitative issues around Internet usage are only part of the larger picture of discursive practices. Therefore, a qualitative analysis of the discourse as it is produced on these organizational websites is necessary. This qualitative approach also reveals an increased potential for progressive agency on the part of the users.

Some scholars, including Isin and Wood, still cite the successes of the Internet as at least considerable if not substantial. One important use of the Internet is as a tool of "technological citizenship". (Isin and Wood, 1999: 105) This new form of citizenship has developed out of recently changing theorization of subjectivity in relation to new technologies. It stresses the importance of the audience as a participant and not merely a passive recipient of information. Referring back to my earlier discussion of Smith, it is important to note again how subjects are positioned as products of and agents within the social relations that occur in the production of texts and discourse. Isin and Wood discuss the Internet's function to create a "many-to-many", "real-time interconnectedness" for groups to disseminate information such as political decisions, which then can be used for political mobilization. (1999: 110-111) Through the Internet, subjects are less distanced from other "audience members" or text producers than in the case of television or print media. It is more immediately possible for users to become more active agents within the production of discourse on the Internet via such methods as chat or email. Isin and Wood also mention the work of groups within a developing "Internet culture" that struggle to protect the freedom of expression threatened by government control and commercialization. (1999: 109) This battle

to evade regulation is one that can also help maintain the Internet's potential as a more democratic space in which individuals and groups can interact and create dialogue.

A more specific case that I find useful for revealing how the Internet can be used as a means for political mobilization is the example given by Graham and Khosravi in Iranian politics. They argue that in the politics of mobilization of Iranians the Internet has had "liberating potential in the penetration or circumvention of communication barriers and in the publicizing of submerged discourses". (2002: 233-235 and 241) However, they also claim that the Internet's potential as an alternative political sphere is "not without its weaknesses" (2002: 242). The example Graham and Khosravi give pertains to gay and lesbian organizations that were marginalized through particular Internet practices in the fight through Internet activism against discrimination in Iranian society. One such group created in 1991 called the *Homan* criticized opponents of the then existing Iranian regime and other human rights organizations for failing to address the issue of abuses that target gays and lesbians in Iranian society. (Graham and Khosravi, 2002: 233-234) The marginalization of this issue was exacerbated by the failure of most of these organizations including Iran's own independent human rights committee to recognize and provide links to any gay and lesbian activist organizations. (Graham and Khosravi, 2002: 234) This example shows how certain types of subjects can be constructed through the practices of political mobilization.

By not providing these links, Graham and Khosravi argue that political organizations can continue to exclude and reproduce inequalities in the domain of the Internet. (2002: 234) When certain subjects are rendered invisible within a debate or are unable to find the means in which to become active participants within a movement, their concerns are deemed irrelevant. The potential for allowing for submerged discourses to arise is one that I would like to stress for my discussion of gay and lesbian organizations' use of the Internet for developing their discourse. The way in which these organizations mobilize identity in order

to form political constituencies are political maneuvers in and of themselves. Organizations can either embrace and work with the differences within an identity-based group or choose to ignore them for strategic purposes. By either advertently or inadvertently submerging alternative voices within a community, a political agenda can be framed in a way that marginalizes certain concerns and, hence, (re)produces inequalities within an already marginalized group.

These practices that I have identified as specific to the Internet are one means through which exclusions can occur. Therefore, one of my concerns in the following analysis is to what extent LGBT activist organizations attempt, through these practices, to include or exclude certain voices within the debate on same-sex marriage. However, as I have previously argued, in order to understand how these organizations conceptualize their existence and the ways in which they struggle for citizenship rights, I must analyze their discourse as it is developed on their websites. Through this qualitative assessment, I will then be able to consider what implications these LGBT organizations and their activities have for the larger debate on same-sex marriage.

2.2 GLAD

In order to explore the transformative potential that exists in the usage of Internet for political mobilization and see what types of subjectivities are produced and reproduced in LGBT Internet activism, I will analyze the content found on the official website, www.glad.org, for the organization GLAD. GLAD, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, was founded in 1978 and based in Boston, Massachusetts but as a regional organization for all of New England. GLAD is an organization composed mostly of lawyers and other professionals within the legal domain. It is legal equality and justice under the law is the dominant conceptual frame in which they claim to attempt to achieve equality in

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society. In their mission statement, this organization claims to be "dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status and gender identity and expression."[11]

GLAD is a non-profit organization that claims to receive the majority of its funding from private individuals. Donations can be made directly via Internet in several forms and by participating in and donating through the dinners, parties, and receptions they organize and advertise again on their website. In this way, the organization potentially receives its support from any individual who has the funds and can access its website.

GLAD members are mainly composed of residents from the Boston region or who have been educated within the region. Being that New England is one of the wealthiest parts of the country and that many staff members have attended some of the most prestigious and expensive educational institutions in the nation, they have most definitely benefited from the availability of educational and economic resources. In line with Isin and Wood's warnings about the potential domination of particular voices on the Internet, I argue that, insofar as the conceptual practices are a dimension of power relations, it is necessary to analyze texts and the particular kinds of values and symbols that may shape the discourse, the agenda, and work within this organization. As a general framework, GLAD articulates what democracy means from the perspective of the sexually marginalized collectives in terms of equality under the law. Therefore, a closer examination of GLAD's activities reveals the practices through which they believe they can strive for this equality.

GLAD's activities include "providing litigation, advocacy, and educational work in all areas of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights and the rights of people living with HIV". To clarify the meaning of "providing litigation, advocacy, and educational work", it is necessary to examine the specificities of these activities as they are presented throughout the website. By entering the Legal InfoLine link on the homepage, the user is immediately

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[11] All quotes from the mission statement of GLAD's organizational website can be found on http://www.glad.org/About_GLAD/. For these quotes, this site was last accessed on April 7, 2007.

referred to the toll-free telephone InfoLine that provides confidential legal information and support. This information is useful for anyone who would like to take legal action independently. For example, via their InfoLine, GLAD provides information on the specific laws that have already been put in place to protect LGBT individuals from discrimination in the workplace, at school, or when receiving medical treatment. They also claim to provide assistance to those who want to act independently by explaining how and where to file a discrimination claim.

From the hyperlink Legal InfoLine, there is another link called "Looking for a Lawyer". On this page, the extent in which GLAD can provide legal assistance becomes clearer. Here, it is stated that GLAD does not provide its own attorneys for litigation. In reference to the information about the many cases in which GLAD lawyers have participated, this information is confusing since at other points it claims that its own attorneys have, in fact, been key figures in several court cases. However, it is stated on this page that if a lawyer is needed, the user can only be referred to information about GLAD's Legal Referral Service. This service provides the user with information about private lawyers and firms that are "friendly" to LGBT people and people with HIV. In cases when an attorney is needed, GLAD does not provide financial assistance and private funds are necessary. They also do not provide information about the fees and rates of these private lawyers. As in the case of any lawsuit, the information provided on the Lawyer Referral Service page states that lawyers do at times take cases on a contingency basis and occasionally *pro bono*.

In general, these services appear to be very helpful in informing any individual about their rights and the potential legal actions that can be taken. However, it seems that the scope of GLAD's own work and direct assistance is limited in instances where more advanced legal action must be taken and where substantial funds would be necessary to take these actions. In this sense, this limitation marginalizes those who are not able to afford professional legal

assistance. GLAD, I would argue, does recognize the limitations of its own assistance. By including the question "I don't have a lot of money. Do the LRS lawyers cost a lot?" within the list of *Frequently Asked Questions* on the Lawyer Referral Service page, GLAD reveals the material constraints that exist in a struggle that focuses on obtaining legal rights within the U.S. judicial system. It seems unfortunate that the solutions they present for this dilemma rely on the charity of wealthier individuals.

It is important to further reflect on what kind of subjects GLAD "speaks" to and what is meant by the statement that their work addresses "all areas of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender civil rights and the rights of people living with HIV". This reference to "all areas" must be examined in relation to the history of GLAD's activities and by considering the position of GLAD's role within the larger frame of LGBT activism. Although this website does contain substantial information pertaining to issues other than marriage and civil unions, such as HIV/AIDS and other civil rights legislation, I would argue that the marriage (to a lesser extent civil union[12]) agenda currently dominates a majority of the space on GLAD's website. On their homepage, for example, a series of recent events, legal developments and court cases are posted. Ten out of the thirteen listings refer to either same-sex marriage or family legislation.[13] There is mention of one case involving a teenager with HIV, one associated with transgender anti-discrimination legislation, and another on the military policy of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell".[14]

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[12] On the hyperlink http://www.glad.org/rights/OP7-marriagevcu.shtml, GLAD makes an argument for the superiority of marriage to civil unions. In places like the GLAD blog, civil unions are referred to as a "second-class substitute for the real deal" http://blog.glad.org/.

[13] This was observed on April 7, 2007

[14] In the case with the 16-year-old teenage girl, GLAD filed an appeal in the Massachusetts Appeals Court, which challenged the state's Medicaid program for denying this girl necessary treatment in relation to her medication induced ailments. The transgender issue is an announcement about GLAD's participation in drafting the state House Bill 1722, which calls for the protection of transgender people in all hate-crime and non-discrimination laws, and refers to their participation along with other organizations such as the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition in organizing a Transgender Equality Lobby Day to support the passage of the bill. The "Don't Ask Don't Tell" challenge refers to an *amicus* brief filed by GLAD in the U.S. Court of Appeals, First Circuit, in November of 2006, which challenges this military policy that requires the expulsion of any member if it is proven or states that she/he engages in "homosexual acts".

By addressing issues such as HIV and transgendered individuals, GLAD does appear to work on issues from many areas that concern LGBT groups. To assess the current prominence of the marriage agenda we can turn to two hyperlinks. An overview of the cases that GLAD has worked on is available on the "GLAD Cases" link on the homepage and depicts cases related to a much broader range of issues with employment, health care benefits, civil rights issues for transgender individuals among others. There is also a hyperlink for GLAD's historical timeline of developments and accomplishments within the mission statement. This timeline shows major highlights within their work that has developed for almost 30 years and has targeted discrimination around many differing situations and topics. These topics include protecting the right for LGBT groups to hold public rallies, protecting the medical rights of individuals with AIDS/HIV, and suing institutions such as schools that have discriminated against LGBT employees.

As one further navigates the pages of GLAD's website, I would argue that the dominance of marriage as their current agenda becomes more apparent. From 1997 when GLAD filed its "Freedom to Marry" case in Vermont to the present, the list refers to a series of legal battles related to marriage and family with the inclusion of one hearing in the U.S. Supreme court about the rights of individuals with AIDS/HIV and one case involving discrimination against a transgender individual. This dominance would reinforce the concerns of some LGBT scholars and activists who claim that marriage has now become a "stand-alone issue" for LGBT activism. (Acey et al., 2006: 3) It may not be a "stand-alone issue" for GLAD as it is in other LGBT organizations. However, it is important to take into consideration the extent in which it dominates and how it interacts with other important issues.

Reinforcing my earlier observation, marriage also has the privileged status as a specific link of its own found from a list of main links on the homepage. On the new page

dedicated exclusively to marriage, the other links mostly refer to specific court cases, the specificities of the marriage legislation as it exists in Massachusetts and the surrounding region, and how the debate around same-sex marriage has evolved.

In referring to the larger debate on same-sex marriage, there is no space given to the voices of LGBT groups or organizations with a different approach, or with alternative viewpoints on the issue, which do not privilege marriage as a means to recognize LGBT families or to gain legal and social equality. For example, the section entitled "Marriage Viewpoints", which exists on the page a user is directed to after selecting the "Marriage" link from the homepage, represents the debate as one between conservatives and the LGBT community in general who supports same-sex marriage. This approach, which frames the debate between pro-marriage gays and lesbians and anti-same-sex marriage conservatives, has been criticized by many as an oversimplified version of a more complicated discussion. (Bell and Binnie, 2000; Hull, 2006; Warner, 1999) A more reflexive approach, I would argue, would allow for the "submerged" voices within the marriage debate that have a different argument about the role of marriage as an issue in which to contest inequalities based on sexuality. Links to pages such as www.beyondmarriage.org or www.unmarried.org would show a more aware approach and a higher level of reflexivity upon GLAD's own position within the same-sex marriage debate and within LGBT activism. These two websites present two different kinds of approaches, which are neither anti-marriage nor anti-gay, although they do not necessarily argue that same-sex marriage should be a means through which the LGBT community strives for equality. I will expand on this point more thoroughly my discussion of these alternative viewpoints in chapter three.

This tendency to prioritize marriage in this way may appear for some to be a logical development within the context of recent events. In addition to the passing of same-sex marriage legislation in Massachusetts, civil union and registered partnership legislation has

been introduced in several of the surrounding states. The New England region has been the site of much recent change regarding the legal recognition of same-sex couples. In 2000, same-sex civil unions became legal for the first time in the United States in Vermont. In Maine, a domestic partnership law passed in 2004 that allows same-sex couples to register and receive some legal and financial benefits. In 2005, Connecticut also passed a law giving same-sex couples the right to enter into civil unions. According to GLAD, although Rhode Island does not have specific legislation regarding this issue, the Attorney General of Rhode Island has made comments that imply there is a possibility that any marriage or civil union performed in another state will be recognized in Rhode Island barring any large public outcry.[15] Most recently in April 2007, New Hampshire's House and Senate approved a bill that was signed into law by the Governor on May 31, 2007 allowing same-sex civil unions.[16] In light of these achievements, it may appear that GLAD's more recent focus on the issue of same-sex marriage exists as a result of these legislative changes. However, taking into consideration that GLAD was involved either directly or indirectly facilitating many of these legal developments including Vermont's civil union law, this fact does not sufficiently explain the complexities and motivations behind GLAD's broader approach.

At this point, I want to explore the implications of the dominance of the issue of marriage in relation to the way GLAD presents its own position on legal rights and the resulting implications for sexual citizenship. The last segment of their mission statement reveals the liberal perspective that GLAD has on its own work:

> When we go to court, we go there to win. But regardless of the outcome, each time we argue a case, we make a statement that chips away at outdated laws, challenges stereotypes, and helps further our cause: to ensure equal justice under law for all.

Here GLAD makes claims to the importance of the freedom to express and be heard (recognition) and the slow process of making change in the legal system. A phrase that I

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[15] Last accessed on http://www.glad.org/rights/rhodeisland_lgbt.shtml#couples
[16] Announced on the homepage of the GLAD website http://www.glad.org last accessed June 4, 2007.

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would like to underline is the one that refers to their work as helping "to ensure equal justice under the law for all". In relation to statements that follow, there appears to be a strong liberal rhetoric on rights and equality in which contradictions appear. It continues:

> The commitment to individual dignity and freedom is an intrinsic part of the American experience, yet for many of us, the way we are treated by society reflects a very different reality. GLAD has sought to create an American society true to its founding principles that all people are created equal and endowed with certain inalienable rights.

In these last two sentences, the references to an "American experience" and an implied ideal American society idealize and essentialize equality within the American system. Yet, by pointing out the necessity to "chip away" at the problematic laws *and* discriminatory practices of this system, GLAD identifies a contradiction that lies within the structure itself. Legal status as an American citizen does not guarantee the lack of discrimination and inequality. This also brings into question the statement that "the commitment to individual dignity and freedom is an intrinsic part of the American experience". By further claiming that the experience of "many" actually differs, there is again a contradiction within this discourse of liberalism.

In terms of citizenship, this attempt to depict the practices of society as separate or as deviations from the actual status of citizens within it is what Isin and Wood might deem a false assumption found within advanced liberalism. (1999: viii-ix) The discrimination that certain subjects in American society experience is not simply an anomaly within a utopian system or simply a matter of individual differences where individuals are merely being "treated" differently. Berlant would maybe argue that type of argumentation "has been used as an alibi to make cases of egregious inequality seem like *exceptions* to a national standard, rather than a structural condition." (1997: 9, emphasis added) The question of inequality that GLAD is addressing consists of much more than simply a problem of treatment. Structurally instituted practices (re)create these inequalities and, therefore, a liberal approach does not properly address or alter them. In this sense, GLAD is simply aiming for the inclusion of the

privilege of marriage for members from an otherwise elite group within society, such as those with higher education and higher income.

This apparent contradiction arises again when making the American founding principles of citizenship appear ahistorical. Here, the question of subjectivity and representation is at stake, who is speaking and being spoken for. Since its introduction into the founding principles, the definition of "people" in American political and legal discourse, for example, has taken on very different meanings according to the historical context. The terms that create the foundations for such principles are historically and contextually bound. This citation of American principles reinstates problematic notions of national democracy as Berlant has described. She writes that "[T]he fantasy of a national democracy was based on principles of abstract personhood (all persons shall be formally equivalent) and its rational representation in a centralized state and federal system. The constitutional American "person" was a white male property owner: more than, though, was unenumerated in the law." (1997:18)

Berlant goes on to point out the hypocrisy of such principles and how this "promise" was used to discipline marginalized subjects such as women, people of color, and non-normative sexualities. (1997: 19) The hypocrisy here lies within promising equal access under a notion of universal citizenship. GLAD's reliance on such principles is an example of an approach found in identity politics that disregards the dynamics within structural dimensions of power and how it can be used to marginalize and exclude within the LGBT collective itself.

This, I would argue, is apparent in the way GLAD positions itself within LGBT political activism. GLAD claims to be speaking for many of "us" who are discriminated against and, at the same time, excludes the voices of LGBT activist who question the legitimacy of using marriage as a means for achieving equality and affirmation in society.

Consequently, they bypass or simply ignore the complicated issue of speaking on behalf of the entire LGBT community and aim instead to secure further privileges to be delivered by inclusion in the marriage institution. In order to avoid this position, it would require them to frame the marriage debate differently and to engage in a more dialogical relationship with other LGBT organizations, which may have relevant criticisms and alternative ideas. This struggle as GLAD has framed it is oversimplified and equates the gain of rights to same-sex marriage to equality in society does not capture the complexities of structurally instituted inequalities within the law, such as the privileged status of married couples, or the process of political mobilization.

2.3 "The Freedom to Marry Coalition"

GLAD is not the only organization in the New England region to approach the struggle for equality for LGBT peoples through the issue of same-sex marriage. The Freedom to Marry Coalition claims it is engaged in activities such as education, advocacy, and lobbying that struggle exclusively for civil marriage rights for same-sex couples. This LGBT organization uses the marriage as a "stand-alone" issue. Although The Freedom to Marry Coalition of Massachusetts has been active since 1993, The Freedom to Marry Foundation was incorporated in 2000. This foundation claims that their goals remain "much the same", which is to "present the human face of the marriage issue" and "demonstrate that same-sex marriage – and gay and lesbian families in general – only enrich society."[17] In order to understand how this organization conceptualizes the relationship between gay and lesbian families and society, it is necessary to more closely read their statement of purpose.

They write that "[W]hile marriage is not the only form that family takes in our society, the union of two people in a long-term, committed, loving relationship has long been

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[17] All statements about the Freedom to Marry Coalition's purpose are taken from the hyperlink http://www.ftmf.org/about.htm last accessed on April 7, 2007.

considered by many to fulfill basic human needs for sharing, commitment, and love." Although this statement makes claims to recognize various types of relationships or families as legitimate, there are limits implied to what they believe are the necessary requirements for these relationships. These limits include monogamy and/or the union of only *two* individuals. It is these normative notions of relationships that have been criticized by some who believe that they fail to capture the complex, more flexible, and diverse types that exist in society today for individuals of all different types of sexuality. (Seidman, 2001; Hull, 2006: 80-81)

> Steven Seidman discusses this sort of normalizing approach:

> The shift in normative heterosexuality to a normalizing logic has been bravely fought for by the mainstream of the gay movement [...] However, legitimation through normalization leaves in place the polluted status of other marginal sexualities and all of the norms that regulate our sexual intimate conduct apart from the norm of heterosexuality. (2001: 326)

This normalizing approach runs the risk of creating "others" of individuals within the LGBT community whose relationships do not exist within the boundaries or do not abide by the rules of so-call "traditional" relationships. Some LGBT women and men have raised the same concerns expressed by Seidman. Pamela Lannutti conducted a recent study in which she analyzes the discourse produced within an LGBT collective. In this study, she uncovers different themes that arise around how this group believes the legalization of marriage may affect the LGBT community in respect to their personal relationships, the intra-community relationships, and the communities relationship to heterosexual others. From her analysis of a web-based survey she conducted immediately after the legalization of same-sex marriage in Massachusetts, she claims that concerns were brought up within the community around issues of stigmatization. (Lannutti, 2005: 12) One participant she quotes states:

> Same-sex marriage will set up marriage as the ultimate relational goal and make other ways of relating and loving invalid in the community. People will start to wonder what is wrong with you if you are in a good relationship and you don't get married, and will be disappointed in you if you say you just don't see marriage as something you want for your life. (Lannutti, 2005: 13)

Lannutti includes the voices of bisexuals and transgender individuals who feel marginalized and that their issues are sidelined due to this same-sex marriage debate. (2005: 13) These

anxieties raise questions or doubts about the organization's claim later in the mission statement that "marriage is a central issue for equality for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals".

The Freedom to Marry Coalition claims that the relationships they support (long-term, monogamous couples) are legitimate because they have "long been considered by many fulfill basic human needs". In these terms, "basic human needs" are established by the consent of "many". This implies that the opinion of the majority is sufficient for determining the needs of individuals. This majoritarian logic is in line with the arguments made by Wolfson that I previously criticized. Here, they conveniently fail to mention the importance of heterosexuality, which has also been part of this normative equation. The paradox is that conservatives apply this same logic in order to marginalize the very gays and lesbians that attempt to make such claims.

As the statement continues, the organization argues that the rights and responsibilities that are extended through civil marriage:

> are intended to protect and promote relationships which are the core of our society. We believe that marriage rights are not only essential to protect families formed by same-sex couples but we also believe that marriage is a central issue in the struggle for equality for all gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals. Only when we have the freedom to choose to marriage will we be equal in the eyes of the law and society.

The fact that The Freedom to Marry Coalition believes marriage to be the central issue for LGBT peoples and the only path to equality in society is supported by their agenda, which makes no reference to other LGBT issues. On their website, the links that they do provide to other activist organizations refer only to pro-same-sex marriage strategies. Some organizations that are mentioned are those that are directly affiliated to The Freedom to Marry Coalition and MassEquality, in which The Freedom to Marry Coalition claims to be a member, and the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry.[18]

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[18] From the About Us link, the user is referred to another link entitled "Other Community Organizations", http://www.equalmarriage.org/about_us/other_organizations.php. MassEquality is a "coalition of local and

Not only is the centrality of this issue not questioned, but the controversy within the LGBT community around is also disregarded. From the "Take Action" link on their webpage, the user can find a section entitled "Advocacy Materials". Under this section, the advocacy materials, which are also referred to as "educational materials" contain documents that supposedly address issues, concerns, and questions that arise around same-sex marriage. All of these materials are pro-marriage perspectives including some that address how to deal with anti-gay conservative arguments.[19] However, the irony of this "guide" to engaging in dialogue disregards the effects of framing a dialogue as polarized between pro-marriage and conservative, anti-gay. It states, for example, in dealing with an individual "[M]eet the person where they are at: Why is it that they are opposed to marriage equality? Is it a religious belief? Are they uncomfortable with the topic?"[20] It is implied that the other individual in this dialogue is conservative.

This type of approach, which claims the centrality one institution and declared that transformation can "only" occur by working within this institution, is what critics of gay rights movements claim "[to] perpetuate belief systems that teach that other, more transformative modes of change are impossible, unnecessary or both" (Hunter quoted in Bell and Binnie, 2000: 58) By arguing that equality can be achieved only through extending rights to those who do not have them, they again discard any possibility to argue that the problem resides within the structure itself.

This is apparent disregard is expressed in the very name of the organization. The "Freedom to Marry" implies that there are no pressures, obligations, or structural instituted incentives to marry in the first place. In fact, this organization's approach (re)affirms the

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national organizations defending equal marriage rights for same-sex couples in Massachusetts". (from their website http://massequality.org/about/) The Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry has a website at http://www.rcfm.org, last accessed June 4, 2007.
[19] The "Talking Points for a Marriage Equality Dialogue" PDF file can be accessed from the hyperlink http://www.equalmarriage.com/take_action/advocacy_materials.php, last accessed on June 4, 2007.
[20] Ibid.

institution of marriage and the structurally administered inequality based on marital status by "continuing the links between marital status and other forms of legal rights." (Bell and Binnie, 2000: 59) Discrimination, in this sense, would just be shifted to those gays and lesbians that are not married. Singles are again marginalized and couples, who are not married or do not want to be married may feel more pressure to do so.

The Freedom to Marry Coalition's expression of a legitimate concern about protecting the diversity of relationships that are publicly condemned by conservatives or extreme forms of homophobia is undermined by the way in which they frame their own arguments for acceptance and diversity. By claiming that the legitimacy of gay and lesbian relationships is based on their adherence to the principles established by the majority of society throughout history, they attempt to assimilate and hide any traces of difference. However, it is this difference that conservative, homophobic claims rely on as grounds for exclusion. This exclusion is often justified with the same logic that marriage has been historically considered by the majority to be a union a man and a woman. This type of assimilationist argument is problematic in the sense that it only reinforces the normative logic that tradition and majority-rule are the means through which to establish legitimacy.

2.4 How and For Whom This Struggle Functions

The Freedom to Marry Coalition relies on assimilationist arguments to justify the inclusion of gay and lesbians in the institution of marriage. This type of identity politics, which relies on the language of "normalization" works to undermine the legitimacy of other types of relationships and also, I would argue, "reinscribes the legitimacy of the dominant" or mainstream ideology around relationships and sexuality. (Ault, 1996: 323) Lehring writes about gay equal rights movements that "[T]he fact that they seek state protection is evidence of the present social and political inferiority however unjust the discrimination they face. But

in the struggle for equal rights, equality if defined by the superior partner in the dichotomy; in short, equality means "sameness"". (1997: 193) Although GLAD's approach is much less about "normalizing" gays and lesbians in terms of mainstream values, they focus much of their struggle for equality in terms of marriage rights. Both approaches sideline the issue of how mainstream values are not simply matters of individual choice, but rather institutionalized or embedded within the structure and legal system itself.

This approach is reinstituted again by the way in which they practice their own politics within LGBT activism. To a much larger extent, The Freedom to Marry Coalition, by excluding the other LGBT issues and other activist voices, reaffirms the values of mainstream ideology that render "others" invisible. GLAD's historical timeline of activities and accomplishments reveals the broader perspective they have including transgender, AIDS/HIV, and other civil rights and discrimination issues. However, recent developments show a turn in their agenda that runs the risk of (over)centralizing their resources towards the struggle for same-sex marriage. GLAD also appears to fail to engage in a dialogue alternatives voices from LGBT scholars and activists and, therefore, lacks a certain amount of what I would argue is necessary self-reflexivity.

Chapter 3: Transgressing the Boundaries of Sexuality-based Identity

3.1 Alternatives to Marriage

As I claimed in the previous chapter, there are other approaches to the issue of same-sex marriage that do not draw on the dichotomy of either pro-marriage or homophobia. They are the Alternative to Marriage Project and the project that produced the "Beyond Marriage" manifesto on the webpage www.beyondmarriage.org. In order to explore the logic of this alternative approach, I argue more comprehensively the role of marriage in society at large. Based on this more thorough understanding of the implications of fighting for marriage as a means to equality, some activists' organizations have developed a different approach for achieving equality not only for the LGBT community but also for other individuals and groups in society including heterosexuals and non-married couples. The two alternative projects I discuss in this chapter transgress the boundaries of sexuality and other identity categories and attempt to reach out to a much larger constituency than just gays and lesbians. In doing so, they have created a more inclusive movement, which is based on their understanding of marriage as a privileged institution that reinforces hegemonic power relations.

3.2 The "Alternatives to Marriage Project"

The Alternative to Marriage Project was created in 1998 by Dorian Solot and Marshall Miller, who were themselves involved in a long-term unmarried relationship.[21] After experiencing discrimination and social pressure due to their choice not to marry, they decided to become political advocates for the equality of non-married peoples.[22] The

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[21] Information from on the webpage http://www.unmarried.org/faq.php, last accessed on May 21, 2007.
[22] Ibid.

organization's home office is in Brooklyn, New York. However, it is a national non-profit, grassroots organization that claims to have ties to and support from individuals and organizations from around the nation and the world. They write that "[M]ore than 90% of our funding is from people around the world who care about support and social justice for unmarried people."[23] According to the "Donate" link on their homepage, the AtMP, the self-attributed abbreviation for the project, relies almost exclusively on individual-based contributions via the Internet, mail, or phone as opposed to the funding of corporations or other outside organizations.[24]

Again, to understand the position of this organization within the debate, I examine the discourse of this activist organization as it is developed and presented in the mission statement from the Alternatives to Marriage Project's website www.unmarried.org. This statement can be accessed via the "About AtMP" link on the homepage. It begins like this:

> The Alternatives to Marriage Project (AtMP) advocates for equality and fairness for unmarried people, including people who are single, choose not to marry, cannot marry, or live together before marriage. We provide support and information for this fast-growing constituency, fight discrimination on the basis of marital status, and educate the public and policymakers about relevant social and economic issues.

This project by speaking on behalf of "unmarried people" struggles for the equal status of all domestic relationships in spite of differences the individuals within them may have based on sexuality, class, or race. People of all different races, economic backgrounds, and sexualities live in various domestic living arrangements for many different reasons. Some are not married by choice. Others do not marry due to the institutionally created exclusion of the right to choose differently. They argue that these people are no less deserving of institutional support than those who marry.

The term "unmarried" may seem to reproduce the binary opposition between married and unmarried individuals, which has been used as a site of contestation where inequality can

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[23] Information from the webpage http://www.unmarried.org/faq.php, last accessed on May 21, 2007.
[24] Information from through the Donate link on the page http://www.unmarried.org/donate.html, last accessed on May 21, 2007.

be (re)produced. However, in this instance, unmarried is being used to indicate the inequalities that individuals incur as an effect of the structural positioning of marriage. By arguing for the "depriviledging" of marriage, they are actually fighting to dismantle the structurally created discrimination. This is not an identity-based political action. On the contrary, the Alternative to Marriage Project is an attempt to expose how inequality is built into the structure of a system that makes such oppositional binary categories inevitable and that creates a relative differentiation between these categories.

The AtMP develops its position further within the "Overview" section of their mission statement. As a response to possible accusations of marriage advocates from either traditional viewpoints or same-sex perspectives, they explicitly write that they are "not against marriage". Further, they claim:

> But we believe that unmarried relationships also deserve validation and support. People may be pressured to marry by their families, friends, and communities. They may also face marital status discrimination. We oppose this unfair treatment and advocate for the equal rights of unmarried people (…)

> The Alternatives to Marriage Project is open to everyone, including singles, couples, married people, people in relationships with more than two people, and people of all genders and sexual orientations. We welcome our married supporters, who are among the many friends, relatives, and allies of unmarried people.

This position is not a clear anti-marriage position. The AtMP claims to not put itself in direct opposition to other pro-marriage projects. Arguably, this oppositional position is somewhat unavoidable if other marriage projects to which they are referring, namely the LGBT attempts, are struggling for the privilege status of marriage, which the AtMP opposes. This position acknowledges the social pressures and cultural significance, therefore, the inequalities it creates for non-married couples. However, it claims that in terms of the law, marriage can be depriviledged as one option among others if all options provide the same rights and benefits to all forms of families or relationship. They qualify this claim by stating

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that this, however, is "only one step in recognizing family diversity in all of its forms".[25] It is useful to see in what other ways the AtMP supports such claims.

On their home page, the AtMP presents a list of topics that it finds relevant in relation to the general marriage debate. This list includes an array of perspectives that include support for and offer alternatives to marriage. Some of issues that present an alternative perspective to marriage are within the sections entitled "Cohabitation", which applies to "different-sex" and same-sex couples; "Marriagefree", which "refer[s] to people who have made a conscious decision not to get married, or are actively opposed to marriage"; or "Polyamory" which, they write, can mean different things to different people but "generally involves honest, responsible non-monogamous relationships". Within these perspectives, there are those who are more anti-marriage, for example, those within the "marriagefree" camp that are explicitly against it. However, the AtMP also mentions that there are those who simply do not find marriage to be a necessary part of their lives or, for example, in the "Cohabitation" section those who may chose marriage later in life. Other more explicitly pro-marriage positions are included in the section "Commitment Ceremony", which emphasizes the importance of the symbolic recognition that is afforded to couples through ceremonies like weddings, or "Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans", which presents differing perspectives within the LGBT community including those who struggle for same-sex marriage rights.

This section is most relevant in relation to the argument I made earlier referring to the practices of the other pro-same-sex marriage organizations. In this section on AtMP's website they write that:

> Marriage can mean a lot of different things to GLBT people (…) There's an active movement to legalize same-sex marriage (the Freedom to Marry movement). The Alternatives to Marriage Project is a strong supporter of this movement -- we believe all people should be able to choose whether they want to marry or not (see our position statement on same-sex marriage).

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[25] This claim is presented on the hyperlink http://www.unmarried.org/samesexmarriage.html last accessed June 2, 2007.

Here the AtMP includes a link to their full position statement pertaining to the same-sex marriage issue, which states:

> We also believe that legalizing same-sex marriage is only one step in a broader movement toward recognizing family diversity in all its forms. While access to marriage will provide important legal protections and social recognition for those same-sex couples who choose to marry, it will not guarantee equality and fairness for unmarried people. Many of these existing inequities should be remedied by changing government policy so that it does not discriminate on the basis of marital status.

The AtMP supports the step of achieving rights for same-sex couples who would choose to do so because it may provide them with the social and cultural recognition that they seek. However, there are those within the LGBT community and within society at large who would not choose to marry. The AtMP correctly points to the inequities that exist for these individuals in a system that does discriminate on the basis of marital status. By claiming to support gay and lesbian couples' inclusion in this institution, the AtMP seems to strategically ignore, in this instance, the existence of social pressures to marry or the elevated status of marriage in general, which they seemingly oppose as stated in their "Overview" statement. To some extent, this may seem to be problematic and a compromise to their position. However, without rallying for the complete destruction of the entire institution of marriage, which is completely utopian from some perspectives, they may see no other way in which to proceed. Therefore, their mission to elevate the status of other types of families and relationships and to provide these domestic arrangements with legal recognition and social benefits and support, is in fact *one* step.

Another significant point I would like to emphasize is the extent to which the AtMP has included links and information for these varying positions I described above. The example that is immediately apparent from the text that I have included here from the page "Gay, Lesbian, Bi, Trans" is the hyperlink "the Freedom to Marry movement". This hyperlink brings the user to a large page of LGBT sources including books and other organizational and informational webpages. Unlike the practices of GLAD or the Freedom to Marry Coalition, there are differing and opposing viewpoints present. GLAD's own webpage

is presented along with other pro-marriage projects such as the "Marriage Project: Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund" or the "Partners Task Force For Gay and Lesbian Couples". Andrew Sullivan's book *Same Sex Marriage: Pro and Con* is also referred to as a useful anthology of essays that gives "both sides of the argument". Under the title "GLBT Books/Groups/People Questioning Same-Sex Marriage", there are links and references to books and articles that propose alternatives to this pro-same-sex marriage agenda such as Claudia Card's article "Against Marriage and Motherhood" and Michael Warner's book *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*. By providing these links and references, the AtMP makes a more sincere attempt to present the diversity of opinions and viewpoints that exists within the LGBT community.

As the AtMP shows, there are alternative viewpoints from those within the LGBT movements. Whether or not those viewpoints are heard depends upon media coverage and the practices of activist organizations. The AtMP's own attempts to "provide support and information" for those who wish to have a more thorough understanding of complexities within the debate around marriage are much more reflexive. On their website, they provide the space for interaction between diverse positions. Through this practice of inclusion, the AtMP is not focusing on differences as essentialized categories, but rather as Isin and Wood might argue using them as a resource for forging new grounds of alliance, fostering the acceptances of being able to disagree. (1999: 13) The AtMP's Internet activist practices expose the differences that exist within various groups, which they claim to support, and, at the same time, uses those differences to critique a system that is blind to them.

3.3 Beyond Marriage

Another important link that the AtMP refers to on their website is www.beyondmarriage.org. This manifesto contains many similar viewpoints that are present on

the AtMP's website. The AtMP even writes that its "founders and Executive Director are pleased to be among the original signatories on "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision for All Our Families & Relationships", which is the manifesto found on this website.[26] In the following section, I provide my analysis of the text provided as a PDF statement provided on the www.beyondmarriage.org website.[27]

The text, "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage: A New Strategic Vision for All Our Families and Relationships", is the product of a project initiated by about twenty LGBT and queer activists, scholars, educators, funders, writers, and cultural workers.[28] In April 2006, these activists came together in a working group to discuss the marriage issue as it had been circulating in the current American political climate.[29] As a result of their dialogue, they composed the text of their manifesto, which they perceive as an amalgamation of their differing perspectives. They begin:

> We offer this statement as a way to challenge ourselves and our allies working across race, class, gender and issue lines to frame and broaden community dialogues, to shape alternative policy solutions and to inform organizing strategies around marriage politics to include the broadest definitions of relationship and family. (Acey et al., 2006: 1)

The authors begin the text with the pronoun 'we', an inclusive pronoun which is meant to indicate not only those who composed the text but the listed signatories and future supporters as well. This list has been and continues to be updated.[30] There is an option given to a user of the website to add her/his signature to this list through the link "Sign Your Name", which then defaults to your email account that automatically composes an email that will be sent to www.beyondmarriage.org. Anyone then can be added to the list. From this perspective, the document appears to be a manifesto as well as a petition. Through interactive

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[26] This quote from the AtMP are found on the webpage http://www.unmarried.org/glbt.php last accessed June 2, 2007.

[27] The full text is presented on the website http://www.beyondmarriage.org. However, because it is a longer text and in order to provide exact page references, I provide citations for the PDF text, which is also provided on the website (see full text in the appendix of this thesis).

[28] Information provided on the webpage http://www.beyondmarriage.org/about.html, last accessed on May 22, 2007.

[29] Ibid.

[30] There are 260 signatories on the on the original document. Hundreds of others have been added to the list since it was updated on August 4, 2006.

Internet practices, the manifesto in some sense becomes a living document with possibly unrealized political potential. The authors also refer to this potential at the end of the document when they state that "this new vision holds long-term potential for creating powerful and vibrant new relationships, coalitions, and alliances across constituencies." (Acey et al., 2006: 7)[31] Later in this chapter, I will discuss some of the more specific principles the authors propose should "shape alternative policy solutions and [to] inform organizing strategies around marriage politics". (Acey et al., 2006: 1)

The most important and contested concepts the authors then refer to in the opening segment of the manifesto are relationship and family. They focus on these concepts as the means through which to contest policies or strategies that rely on more narrow definitions such as those using qualifications like a partnership of different sexes, a partnership of two individuals, monogamous, or even sexual interaction. This is later illustrated in their text when they give examples of relationships or families that do not fulfill one or more of these criteria: "[S]enior citizens living together, serving as each other's caregivers, partners, and/or constructed families", "[A]dult children living with and caring for their parents", "[C]ommitted, loving households in which there is more than one conjugal partner", "[S]ingle parent households or Queer couples who decide to jointly create and raise a child with another queer person or couple, in two households" to list a few. (Acey et al., 2006: 2) The important point about this list is that these relationships and families do not fulfill the traditional, conservative definition of family, and much more to the point, *nor* do they meet the definition of 'family' as it is framed according to the logic of same-sex marriage

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[31] This being said, I could not find any specific references to intentions to form an organization or something similar. In an article "'Beyond Marriage' Statement Sparks Dialogue" in an issue of the *Bay Area Reporter* Vol. 37. No. 22. on May 21, 2006, reporter Zak Szymanksi writes "[A]s for LGBT groups across the country who say they already do support most of the tenets in the Beyond Marriage statement, DeFilippis [Joseph DeFilippis is one of the leading organizers of the statement] said, "now I'd like to see an appropriate strategy and allocation of resources." From this perspective, the goal appears to be more towards pushing already existing organizations to adjust their strategies from within.

legislation as proposed by certain LGBT initiatives, such as GLAD that simply replaces man and woman with the possibility of a same-sex scenario.

How then do these authors propose to transgress these differences and create improved policies? What purpose does this approach serve and for whom does it benefit most? A closer reading of the text can enable me to better answer these questions. The statement continues to state that these signatories:

> seek to offer friends and colleagues everywhere a new vision for securing governmental and private institutional recognition of diverse kinds of partnerships, households, kinship relationships and families. In so doing, we hope to move beyond the narrow confines of marriage politics as they exist in the United States today.
> ***We seek access to a flexible set of economic benefits and options regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender/gender identity, class, or citizenship status.*** (authors' emphasis) (Acey et al., 2006: 1)

It is clear from these statements that the authors are not only searching for the social or cultural recognition of various types of domestic arrangements, but for the equal redistribution of economic benefits and options that have been the privilege of married couples. Here, the claim is that those who maneuver within the "narrow confines of marriage politics" do not typically address the issue of the diversity of relationships or how this privileged status of marriage disproportionately discriminates against some due to difference in race, class, or citizenship status. The authors claim that discrimination associated with these different types of status is often produced in "harsh political and economic circumstances" that result from and produce "the structural violence of poverty, racism, misogyny, war, and repression". (Acey et al., 2006: 1)

This approach reveals a broader spectrum of individuals and groups that are made invisible through certain framing mechanisms within the structure. These framing mechanisms are part of and supported by what Berlant has described as the "new nostalgia-based fantasy notion of the "American way of life"". (1997: 5) This fantasy Berlant identifies further exacerbates and is exacerbated by a climate in which political identifications are "rooted in traditional notions of home, family and community." (1997: 5) Revealing these

mechanisms helps uncover the more complicated system in which these individuals attempt to declare their status and struggle for rights as citizens in the public sphere. Citizenship rights are produced through these practices, which are shaped by the political struggles.

Berlant describes the "intimate public sphere" as a place where citizenship is rendered "as a condition of social membership produced by personal acts and values, especially acts originating in or directed toward the family sphere". (1997: 5) A person's citizenship status is determined by a legal status that is granted according to the ways in which an individual conducts life in the home, in a 'family'. Those who do not fulfill conservative, normative criteria are deemed unworthy of this status or the state's support as meager as it might be. Smith articulates even further the nature of the American climate in relation to recent legislative developments such as the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) and the Personal Responsibilities Act (PRA). She states that these acts are "both sites in which two contradictory post-welfare trends are articulated together, namely, the shift towards the reduction of state intervention in the family and civil society where redistribution is concerned, and the shift towards the intensification of state intervention in the terrain of morality and sexuality". (Smith, 2001: 316-317)

The authors of "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" reflect on these conditions in which the same-sex marriage struggle is being waged. They claim that the gap between the rich and poor is growing and that this is disproportionately affecting for example "people of color and single-parent families headed by woman".

> The Right's anti-LGBT position is only a small part of a much broader conservative agenda of coercive, patriarchal marriage promotion that plays out in any number of civic arenas in a variety of ways – all of which disproportionately impact poor, immigrant, and people-of-color communities. The purpose is not only to enforce narrow, heterosexist definitions of marriage and coerce conformity, but also to slash to the bone governmental funding for a wide array of family programs, including childcare, healthcare and reproductive services, and nutrition, and transfer responsibility for financial survival to families themselves. (Acey et al., 2006: 3)

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From this perspective, there seem to be larger stakes at hand. The struggle is not only a matter of recognition for gays and lesbians but for all those who are marginalized due to their "inferior" relation to the dominating myths of family and heteronormativity. The issue of redistribution is not an additional factor in this struggle but intertwined and integral for understanding how this marginalization occurs. The authors, therefore, acknowledge that the battle for same-sex marriage alone does not sufficiently address how inequalities are structured within the legal system.

The authors emphasize the importance of the economic ramifications of these struggles by outlining some of the difficulties that various "families" experience due to their exclusion from the benefits distributed based on marital status. They stress the affects on particular groups within the LGBT community such as transgender, other gender-nonconforming people, and the elderly. They echo claims made by Berlant and Smith that critique current political agendas that endeavor to dismantle the few still existing institutions of public service and benefit programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, and public education. (Acey et al., 2006: 4) The struggle for same-sex marriage, therefore, does not adequately address the ways in which many individuals, including LGBT individuals are marginalized within the existing social context. In light of all of these criticisms, the authors do make some concessions to the same-sex marriage movement.

Similar to the Alternatives to Marriage Project, these authors also do not claim to be against the struggle for same-sex marriage. However, as I have argued previously, the authors explicitly expose and highlight the limitations of this approach in the context where so many economic and social benefits are only available to those who are married and even those are disappearing. They write that:

> This bad news is further complicated by a segment of LGBT movement strategy that focuses on same-sex marriage as a stand-alone issue. Should this strategy succeed, many individuals and households in LGBT communities will be unable to access benefits and support opportunities that they need because those benefits will only be available through marriage, if they remain available at all." (Acey et al., 2006: 4)

Therefore, the "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" project more thoroughly addresses the implications that arise from basing any political movement exclusively or mainly on the achievement of same-sex marriage rights and does not fall into the trap of arguing that the freedom to choose to marry result in the equality for all.

Later in the text, they suggest that marriage can be "one option". (Acey et al., 2006: 7) However, along with citing the economic inequalities that are produced with this agenda, they again stress the pitfalls of a struggle where marriage is the primary goal because of how it narrowly defines "legitimate families" and because of the then reinforced superior status it would then claim.

> Marriage is not the only worthy form of family or relationship, and it should not be legally and economically privileged above all others. While we honor those for whom marriage is the most meaningful personal – for some, also a deeply spiritual – choice, we believe that many other kinds of kinship relationship, households, and families must also be accorded recognition. (Acey et al., 2006: 2)

By attempting to broaden the definition of the types of families or relationships that should be recognized and given equal economic and social support, these author's expose the ways in which a narrowly defined same-sex marriage agenda fails to capture the larger implications of privileging marriage as a means for achieving equality. A struggle for same-sex marriage rights is simply an inadequate means of exposing and then transforming these inequalities.

In response to those who might claim that their arguments are either too utopian or idealistic and do not offer concrete solutions or examples, the authors present a clearly defined list of goals and principles that they find to be central to their vision. These include such demands as:

> - Legal recognition for a wide range of relationships, households, and families, and for the children in all of those households and families, including same-sex marriage, domestic partner benefits, second-parent adoptions, and others
> - The separation of benefits and recognition from marital status, citizenship status, and the requirement that "legitimate" relationships be conjugal
> - Access for all to vital government support programs, including but not limited to: affordable and adequate health care, affordable housing, a secure and enhanced Social Security system, genuine disaster recovery assistance, welfare for the poor (Acey et al., 2006: 5)

These demands and principles with a few additional examples to illustrate their points seem to simply reproduce parts of their earlier discussion. However, the authors move further by offering more details examples of projects that they claim have been successful in accomplishing some, if not all, of the demands that they present.

The last section of the manifesto is entitled "Winnable Strategy". The authors give examples of political movements within the U.S. such as in Arizona or South Carolina where coalitions have been fighting proposed constitutional amendments, but do so in a way that they frame the struggle in support of all families and relationships, including those from LGBT community. It also draws support from the examples of legislation developed in Canada such as the Modernization of Benefits and Obligation Act (2000). This sort of legislation they claim is a step in the direction of eliminating the distinction between married and unmarried relationships. (Acey et al., 2006: 6) They also cite the report "Beyond Conjugality" created by Canada's Law Commission in 2001 that calls for the legal recognition and support of "all caring and interdependent personal adult relationships, regardless of whether or not the relationships are conjugal in nature". (Acey et al., 2006:6)

In a summary of the report by the Office of Legislative Research[32], Susan Price-Livingston writes that recommendations from the report include the passage of laws that allow adults to register their relationships, that these relationships may be both conjugal and non-conjugal, and that these registrations allow the ability for the registrants to modify provisions where they deem necessary.[33] In relation to this registered relationship, the report recommends that "revisions [be made] to admiralty, labor, evidence, public assistance, bankruptcy, tax, immigration, and various prohibited transaction laws that create

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[32] Information about the Connecticut General Assembly Office of Legislative Research is available at http://www.cga.ct.gov/olr/default.asp last accessed June 2, 2007.

[33] This summary, written in February of 2002, is available at http://www.cga.ct.gov/2002/rpt/2002-R-0172.htm last accessed June 2, 2007.

classifications based on conjugal status." [34] It also recommends that legal recognition of civil marriage continue and that national and local governments continue towards recognizing same-sex marriages.[35] Although, I have not cited the specifics of the original text, all of the recommendations and policies identified in this report seem to be heading in the direction to which the authors of "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" adhere. The report "Beyond Conjugality" recognizes the states' intervention in declaring what does and does not constitute a legitimate family or domestic arrangement and offers the alternative policy that would allow citizens to register their partnerships in more flexible manners according to their needs and provide them with legal and economic support.

3.4 A Different Framework for Achieving Recognition and Redistribution

In the current political and social climate of the United States, a new approach to obtaining recognition, legal rights, and financial security for those who have none is necessary and that avenue does not seem to lead to "the walk down the isle". Whether or not the specific examples of approaches used in Canada or other U.S. states that are provided by the authors of "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" are sufficient would be for further research. However, they do try to show that alternative approaches can and should be developed.

The liberal agenda, as I have argued, does not address the structural inequalities that are produced through the institution of marriage. Berlant poignantly raises the question "to what degree liberals and the left have absorbed the conservative world view, relinquishing the fight against structural inequality for a more labile and optimistic culturalist perspective." (1997: 5-6) The liberal approaches GLAD and The Freedom to Marry Coalition, which I have analyzed here, seem to reinforce some the concerns implied by Berlant's question; albeit

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid. It is also interesting to note here that same-sex marriages were legalized in Canada on July 20, 2005 with the passing of Bill C-38, which can be accessed from the hyperlink http://www2.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Language=E&Parl=38&Ses=1&Mode=1&Pub=Bill&Doc=C-38_4&File=29 last accessed June 2, 2007.

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each to different degrees. Therefore, I argue that the visions and principles presented in "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" offer the most useful framework in which to begin thinking about how LGBT activism can push forward. Through this framework not only gays and lesbians but many other individuals who cannot marry will receive recognition of their various types of households, families, and relationships and the economic support that they, as much as any traditional family, deserve.

Conclusions

In this paper, I started by showing that the identity-based struggles for citizenship rights necessarily and equally involve aims of achieving recognition and redistribution. For some LGBT activist organizations, these struggles are concentrated on the inclusion of same-sex couples into the institution of marriage. I have claimed that the practices of signification through which these groups make sense of their own work, their processes of identification, shape and are shaped by the methods in which they strive to achieve these citizenship rights. Therefore, in order to reveal how and for whom these struggles are waged, I conducted a discourse analysis on the mission statements of GLAD and The Freedom to Marry Coalition, which are two organizations that actively pursue this pro-same-sex marriage strategy for obtaining equality for the LGBT community.

In the case of these LGBT activists approaches, I conclude that the struggle for social and cultural equality and economic security for LGBT relationships and families in the current political and economic climate of the United States would be better served by more far-reaching, long-term strategies. These strategies would be shaped by principles such as those presented in the statement "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage", which I analyzed in the final part of this thesis. A further analysis of some of the concrete examples of legislation and activist strategies described in this text would contribute to creating a more developed picture of possible future actions. However, for the sake of this project it is sufficient to point to the main claim of this text, which is that these strategies should strive for the recognition and the economic support of all sorts of relationships and families that are not included within the narrow, traditional definition of a nuclear family.

This approach in relation to the theoretical conclusions I made at the beginning of this thesis better capture the complexities that exist in struggling for citizenship rights. Since the pursuit of citizenship rights is not simply a matter of receiving recognition and equally entails

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the battle for redistribution, I have tried to show that these "families" are not in need of being recognized as such. As the authors of "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" correctly argue, they should be given the same economic support, services, and benefits as those up till now given to only heterosexual couples recognized by the institution of marriage. These principles support claims for the legal recognition of all sorts of families through possible legal constructions such as domestic partnerships or civil union, which contain all of the rights and benefits as usually extended through marriage, or other still unimagined possibilities, such as providing flexibility for registering a partnership. Therefore, by developing a strategy that addresses these principles, LGBT activism would expand its constituency to a large group of non-married individuals who equally require the support and recognition within the state and society at large.

This approach to achieving equality more effectively addresses the differences that exist within LGBT communities and possibly speaks to groups and people outside of the community that are affected by the same system of discrimination. This strategy more comprehensively addresses the structurally created social, cultural, and legal inequalities within a system that privileges hegemonic sexualities and relationships through such institutions as marriage. To conclude, since it seems unlikely that the marriage, as a privileged institution through which citizenship rights are delivered, will be completely dismantled anytime in the near future, LGBT organizations can and must find approaches that aim to depriviledge the institution rather than reinforce its already superior status by struggling for inclusion within it.

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Appendix

BEYOND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE:
A NEW STRATEGIC VISION FOR ALL OUR FAMILIES & RELATIONSHIPS
July 26, 2006

We, the undersigned – lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and allied activists, scholars, educators, writers, artists, lawyers, journalists, and community organizers – seek to offer friends and colleagues everywhere a new vision for securing governmental and private institutional recognition of diverse kinds of partnerships, households, kinship relationships and families. In so doing, we hope to move beyond the narrow confines of marriage politics as they exist in the United States today.

We seek access to a flexible set of economic benefits and options regardless of sexual orientation, race, gender/gender identity, class, or citizenship status.

We reflect and honor the diverse ways in which people find and practice love, form relationships, create communities and networks of caring and support, establish households, bring families into being, and build innovative structures to support and sustain community.
In offering this vision, we declare ourselves to be part of an interdependent, global community. We stand with people of every racial, gender and sexual identity, in the United States and throughout the world, who are working day-to-day – often in harsh political and economic circumstances – to resist the structural violence of poverty, racism, misogyny, war, and repression, and to build an unshakeable foundation of social and economic justice for all, from which authentic peace and recognition of global human rights can at long last emerge.

WHY THE LGBT MOVEMENT NEEDS A NEW STRATEGIC VISION

Household & Family Diversity is Already the Norm

The struggle for same-sex marriage rights is only one part of a larger effort to strengthen the security and stability of diverse households and families. LGBT communities have ample reason to recognize that families and relationships know no borders and will never slot narrowly into a single existing template.

All families, relationships, and households struggling for stability and economic security will be helped by separating basic forms of legal and economic recognition from the requirement of marital and conjugal relationship.

U.S. Census findings tell us that a majority of people, whatever their sexual and gender identities, do not live in traditional nuclear families. Recognizing the diverse households that already are the norm in this country is simply a matter of expanding upon the various forms of legal recognition that already are available. The LGBT movement has played an instrumental role in creating and

advocating for domestic partnerships, second parent adoptions, reciprocal beneficiary arrangements, joint tenancy/home-ownership contracts, health care proxies, powers of attorney, and other mechanisms that help provide stability and security for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual individuals and families. During the height of the AIDS epidemic, our communities formed support systems and constructed new kinds of families and partnerships in the face of devastating crisis and heartbreak. Both our communities and our HIV organizations recognized, respected, and fought for the rights of non-traditionally constructed families and non-conventional partnerships. Moreover, the transgender and bisexual movements, so often historically left behind or left out by the larger lesbian and gay movement, have powerfully challenged legal constructions of relationship and fought for social, legal, and economic recognition of partnerships, households, and families, which include members who shatter the narrow confines of gender conformity.

To have our government define as "legitimate families" only those households with couples in conjugal relationships does a tremendous disservice to the many other ways in which people actually construct their families, kinship networks, households, and relationships. For example, who among us seriously will argue that the following kinds of households are less socially, economically, and spiritually worthy?

• Senior citizens living together, serving as each other's caregivers, partners, and/or constructed families
• Adult children living with and caring for their parents
• Grandparents and other family members raising their children's (and/or a relative's) children
• Committed, loving households in which there is more than one conjugal partner
• Blended families
• Single parent households
• Extended families (especially in particular immigrant populations) living under one roof, whose members care for one another
• Queer couples who decide to jointly create and raise a child with another queer person or couple, in two households
• Close friends and siblings who live together in long-term, committed, non-conjugal relationships, serving as each other's primary support and caregivers
• Care-giving and partnership relationships that have been developed to provide support systems to those living with HIV/AIDS

Marriage is not the only worthy form of family or relationship, and it should not be legally and economically privileged above all others. While we honor those for whom marriage is the most meaningful personal – for some, also a deeply spiritual – choice, we believe that many other kinds of kinship relationship, households, and families must also be accorded recognition.

An Increasing Number of Households & Families Face Economic Stress

Our strategies must speak not only to the fears, but also the hopes, of millions of people in this country – LGBT people and others – who are justifiably afraid and anxious about their own economic futures.

Poverty and economic hardship are widespread and increasing. Corporate greed, draconian tax cuts and breaks for the wealthy, and the increasing shift of public funds from human needs into militarism, policing, and prison construction are producing ever-greater wealth and income gaps between the rich and the poor, in this country and throughout the world. In the United States, more and more individuals and families (disproportionately people of color and single-parent families headed by women) are experiencing the violence of poverty. Millions of people are without health care, decent housing, or enough to eat. We believe an LGBT vision for the future ought to accurately reflect what is happening throughout this country. People are forming unique unions and Relationships that allow them to survive and create the communities and partnerships that mirror their circumstances, needs, and hopes. While many in the LGBT community call for legal recognition of same-sex marriage, many others – heterosexual and/or LGBT – are shaping for themselves the relationships, unions, and informal kinship systems that validate and support their daily lives, the lives they are actually living, regardless of what direction the current ideological winds might be blowing.

The Right's "Marriage Movement" is Much Broader than Same-Sex Marriage

LGBT movement strategies must be sufficiently prophetic, visionary, creative, and practical to counter the right's powerful and effective use of "wedge" politics – the strategic marketing of fear and resentment that pits one group against another. Right-wing strategists do not merely oppose same-sex marriage as a stand-alone issue. The entire legal framework of civil rights for all people is under assault by the Right, coded not only in terms of sexuality, but also in terms of race, gender, class, and citizenship status. The Right's anti-LGBT position is only a small part of a much broader conservative agenda of coercive, patriarchal marriage promotion that plays out in any number of civic arenas in a variety of ways – all of which
disproportionately impact poor, immigrant, and people-of-color communities. The purpose is not only to enforce narrow, heterosexist definitions of marriage and coerce conformity, but also to slash to the bone governmental funding for a wide array of family programs, including childcare, healthcare and reproductive services, and nutrition, and transfer responsibility for financial survival to families themselves.

Moreover, as we all know, the Right has successfully embedded "stealth" language into many anti-LGBT marriage amendments and initiatives, creating a framework for dismantling domestic partner benefit plans and other forms of household recognition (for queers and heterosexual people alike). Movement resources are drained by defensive struggles to address the Right's issue-by-issue assaults. Our strategies must engage these issues head-on, for the long term, from a position of vision and strength.

"Yes!" to Caring Civil Society and "No!" to the Right's Push for Privatization

Winning marriage equality in order to access our partners' benefits makes little sense if the benefits that we seek are being shredded.

At the same time same-sex marriage advocates promote marriage equality as a way for same-sex couples and their families to secure Social Security survivor and other marriage-related benefits, the

Right has mounted a long-term strategic battle to dismantle all public service and benefit programs and civic values that were established beginning in the 1930s, initially as a response to widening poverty and the Great Depression. The push to privatize Social Security and many other human needs benefits, programs, and resources that serve as lifelines for many, married or not, is at the center of this attack. In fact, all but the most privileged households and families are in jeopardy as a result of a wholesale right-wing assault on funding for human needs, including Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, HIV-AIDS research and treatment, public education, affordable housing, and more.

This bad news is further complicated by a segment of LGBT movement strategy that focuses on same-sex marriage as a stand-alone issue. Should this strategy succeed, many individuals and households in LGBT communities will be unable to access benefits and support opportunities that they need because those benefits will only be available through marriage, if they remain available at all. Many transgender, gender queer, and other gender-nonconforming people will be especially vulnerable, as will seniors. For example, an estimated 70-80% of LGBT elders live as single people, yet they need many of the health care, disability, and survivorship benefits now provided through partnerships *only* when the partners are legally married.

Rather than focus on same-sex marriage rights as the only strategy, we believe the LGBT movement should reinforce the idea that marriage should be one of many avenues through which households, families, partners, and kinship relationships can gain access to the support of a caring civil society.

The Longing for Community and Connectedness

We believe LGBT movement strategies must not only democratize recognition and benefits but also speak to the widespread hunger for authentic and just community.

So many people in our society and throughout the world long for a sense of caring community and connectedness, and for the ability to have a decent standard of living and pursue meaningful lives free from the threat of violence and intimidation. We seek to create a movement that addresses this longing.

So many of us long for communities in which there is systemic affirmation, valuing, and nurturing of difference, and in which conformity to a narrow and restricting vision is never demanded as the price of admission to caring civil society. Our vision is the creation of communities in which we are encouraged to explore the widest range of non-exploitive, non-abusive possibilities in love, gender, desire and sex – and in the creation of new forms of constructed families without fear that this searching will potentially forfeit for us our right to be honored and valued within our communities and in the wider world. Many of us, too, across all identities, yearn for an end to repressive attempts to control our personal lives. For LGBT and queer communities, this longing has special significance.

We who have signed this statement believe it is essential to work for the creation of public arenas and spaces in which we are free to embrace all of who we are, repudiate the right-wing demonizing of LGBT sexuality and assaults upon queer culture, openly engage issues of desire and longing, and affirm, in the context of caring community, the complexities and richness of gender and sexual diversity. However we choose to live, there must be a legitimate place for us.

THE PRINCIPLES AT THE HEART OF OUR VISION
We, the undersigned, suggest that strategies rooted in the following principles are urgently needed:

☐ Recognition and respect for our chosen relationships, in their many forms

☐ Legal recognition for a wide range of relationships, households, and families, and for the children in all of those households and families, including same-sex marriage, domestic partner benefits, second-parent adoptions, and others

☐ The means to care for one another and those we love

☐ The separation of benefits and recognition from marital status, citizenship status, and the requirement that "legitimate" relationships be conjugal

☐ Separation of church and state in all matters, including regulation and recognition of relationships, households, and families

☐ Access for all to vital government support programs, including but not limited to: affordable and adequate health care, affordable housing, a secure and enhanced Social Security system, genuine disaster recovery assistance, welfare for the poor

☐ Freedom from a narrow definition of our sexual lives and gender choices, identities, and expression

☐ Recognition of interdependence as a civic principle and practical affirmation of the importance of joining with others (who may or may not be LGBT) who also face opposition to their household and family compositions, including old people, immigrant communities, single parents, battered women, prisoners and former prisoners, people with disabilities, and poor people

We must ensure that our strategies do not help create or strengthen the legal framework for gutting domestic partnerships (LGBT and heterosexual) for those who prefer this or another option to marriage, reciprocal beneficiary agreements, and more. LGBT movement strategies must never secure privilege for some while at the same time foreclosing options for many. Our strategies should expand the current terms of debate, not reinforce them.

A WINNABLE STRATEGY

No movement thrives without the critical capacity to imagine what is possible.

Our call for an inclusive new civic commitment to the recognition and well-being of diverse households and families is neither utopian nor unrealistic. To those who argue that marriage equality must take strategic precedence over the need for relationship recognition for other kinds of partnerships, households, and families, we note that same-sex marriage (or close approximations thereof) were approved in Canada and other countries only after civic commitments to universal or widely available healthcare and other such benefits. In addition, in the United States, a strategy that links same-sex partner rights with a broader vision is beginning to influence some statewide campaigns to defeat same-sex marriage initiatives.

A Vision for All Our Families and Relationships is Already Inspiring Positive Change

We offer a few examples of the ways in which an inclusive vision, such as we propose, can promote practical, progressive change and open up new opportunities for strategic bridge-building.

• Canada

    Canada has taken significant steps in recent years toward legally recognizing the equal value of the ways in which people construct their families and relationships that fulfill critical social functions (such as parenting, assumption of economic support, provision of support for aging and infirm persons, and more).

        o In the 1990s, two constitutional cases heard by that country's Supreme Court extended specific rights and responsibilities of marriage to both opposite-sex and same-sex couples. Canada's federal Modernization of Benefits and Obligation Act (2000) then virtually erased the legal distinction between marital and non-marital conjugal relationships.

        o In 2001, in consideration of its mandate to "consider measures that will make the legal system more efficient, economical, accessible, and just," the Law Commission of Canada released a report, *Beyond Conjugality,* calling for fundamental revisions in the law to honor and support all caring and interdependent personal adult relationships, regardless of whether or not the relationships are conjugal in nature.

• Arizona

    The Arizona Together Coalition (www.aztogether.org) is currently running a broad, multiconstituency campaign that emphasizes how the proposed constitutional amendment to "protect marriage" will affect not just same-sex couples but also seniors, survivors of domestic violence, unmarried heterosexual couples, adopted children and the business community. The Arizona Coalition highlights the probability that the amendment will eliminate domestic partnership recognition, by both government and businesses. They also point out that DOMA supporters are the same forces that wanted to keep cohabitation a crime. As a result of the Coalition's efforts, support for the constitutional amendment declined sharply in polls (from 49% to 33%) in the course of a few months (May 2005 - September 2005). Accordingly, should the amendment make it onto the November 2006 ballot, Arizona is poised to become the first state to reject a state anti-gay constitutional marriage amendment in the voting booth. We suggest that the LGBT movement pay close attention to the way that activists in Arizona frame their campaign to be about protecting a variety of different family arrangements.

• South Carolina

    The South Carolina Equality Coalition (www.scequality.org) is fighting a proposed constitutional amendment with an organizing effort emphasizing "Fairness for All Families." This coalition is not only focused on LGBT-headed families, but is also intentionally building relationships with a broad multi-constituency base of immigrant communities, elders, survivors of domestic violence, unmarried heterosexual couples, adopted children, families of prisoners, and more. As we write this statement, the Coalition's efforts to work in this broader way are being further strengthened by emphasis on the message that "Families have no borders. We all belong."

• Utah

In September 2005, Salt Lake City Mayor Ross Anderson signed an Executive Order enabling city employees to obtain health insurance benefits for their "domestic partners." A few months later, trumping the executive order, the Salt Lake City Council enacted an ordinance allowing city employees to identify an "adult designee" who would be entitled to health insurance benefits in conjunction with the benefits provided to the employee. The requirements included living with the employee for more than a year, being at least 18 years old, and being economically dependent or interdependent. Benefits extend to children of the adult designee as well. While an employee's same-sex or opposite-sex partner could qualify, this definition is broad enough to encompass many other household configurations. The ordinance has survived both a veto by the Mayor (who wanted to provide benefits only to "spousal like" relationships) and a lawsuit launched by anti-gay groups. The judge who ruled in the lawsuit wrote that "single employees may have relationships outside of marriage, whether motivated by family feeling, emotional attachment or practical considerations, which draw on their resources to provide the necessaries of life, including health care." We advocate close attention to such efforts to provide material support for the widest possible range of household formations.

We offer these four examples to show that there are ways of moving forward with a strategic vision that is broader than same-sex marriage, and encompassing of all our families and relationships. Different regions of our country will require different strategies, but we can, and must, keep central to our work the idea that all family forms must be protected – not just because it is the right thing to do, but also because it is the strategic and winnable way to move forward.

A Bold, New Vision Will Speak to Many Who are Not Already With Us
At a time when an ethos of narrow self-interest and exclusion of difference is ascendant, and when the Right asserts a scarcity of human rights and social and economic goods, this new vision holds long-term potential for creating powerful and vibrant new relationships, coalitions, and alliances across constituencies – communities of color, immigrant communities, LGBT and queer communities, senior citizens, single-parent families, the working poor, and more –hit hard by the greed and inhumanity of the Right's economic and political agendas.

At a time when the conservative movement is generating an agenda of fear, retrenchment, and opposition to the very idea of a caring society, we need to claim the deepest possibilities for interdependent social relationships and human expression. We must dare to dream the world that we need, the world that has room for us all, even as we also do the painstaking work of crafting the practical strategies that will address the realities of our daily lives. The LGBT movement has a history of being diligent and creative in protecting our families. Now, more than ever, is the time to continue to find new ways of defending all our families, and to fight to make same-sex marriage just one option on a menu of choices that people have about the way they construct their lives.

We invite friends everywhere to join us in ensuring that there is room, recognition, and practical support for us all, as we dream together a new future where all people will truly be free.