

Formal Rights and Informal Privileges for Same-Sex Couples: Evidence from a National Survey Experiment

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Abstract

Attitudes toward gay rights have liberalized over the past few decades, but scholars know less about the extent to which individuals in the United States exhibit subtle forms of prejudice toward lesbians and gays. To help address this issue, we offer a conceptualization of formal rights and informal privileges. Using original data from a nationally representative survey experiment, we examine whether people distinguish between formal rights (e.g., partnership benefits) and informal privileges (e.g., public displays of affection) in their attitudes toward same-sex couples. Results show that heterosexuals are as willing to extend formal rights to same-sex couples as they are to unmarried heterosexual couples. However, they are less willing to grant informal privileges. Lesbians and gays are more willing to extend formal rights to same-sex couples, but they too are sometimes more supportive of informal privileges for heterosexual couples. We also find that heterosexuals' attitudes toward marriage more closely align with their attitudes toward informal privileges than formal rights, whereas lesbians and gays view marriage similarly to *both* formal rights and informal privileges. Our findings highlight the need to examine multiple dimensions of sexual prejudice to help understand how informal types of prejudice persist as minority groups receive formal rights.

Keywords

formal rights, informal privileges, same-sex couples, modern prejudice, intergroup relations

In the United States, individuals' attitudes toward lesbian and gay rights have become increasingly favorable over the past few decades (Andersen and Fetner 2008; Keleher and Smith 2012; Loftus 2001). Indeed, attitudes toward homosexuality have changed more rapidly over the past few decades than for any other sexuality issue (Treas 2002). The sharpest instances of liberalization have occurred in the area of civil rights (Brooks 2000; Yang 1997), but support for legal protections for lesbians and gays should not be conflated with favorable attitudes toward

lesbians and gays in general. We ask whether general acceptance of same-sex couples in the United States mirrors increasingly receptive views toward their rights.

To these ends, we conceptually distinguish between what we call formal rights and

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informal privileges. *Formal rights* are legal rights, such as the partnership benefits conferred on married couples. Formal rights have been the focus of most attitudinal research on homosexuality, especially nationally representative research (Lewis 2011; Skipworth, Gerner, and Dettrey 2010). Less studied are *informal privileges*, which are interactional and often subtle advantages (e.g., public displays of affection) that dominant groups enjoy over minority groups.

To discern whether individuals in the United States differ in their willingness to grant formal rights and informal privileges, we ask four questions:

1. Are people more willing to grant partnership benefits to heterosexual couples than to same-sex couples?
2. Are they more supportive of public displays of affection by heterosexual couples than by same-sex couples?
3. Do people view marriage more similarly to formal rights or informal privileges?
4. Do these patterns vary across heterosexual, lesbian, and gay respondents?

In the following sections, we discuss two broad areas of research that apply to our analysis. We first review theories of modern prejudice, which inform our conceptualization and hypotheses surrounding formal rights and informal privileges. Then, using theories of group threat and intergroup competition, we present hypotheses about how heterosexual, lesbian, and gay respondents might react to heterosexual, lesbian, and gay couples. To test these hypotheses, we analyze original data from a nationally representative sample of individuals in the United States.¹ Our study experimentally manipulates the sexual orientation of an unmarried couple described in a vignette. We then ask heterosexual, lesbian, and gay respondents questions about their approval of formal rights and informal privileges for the hypothetical couple. In holding constant confounding factors, such as the couple's assumed marital status, we explicitly compare individuals'

attitudes toward heterosexual, lesbian, and gay *unmarried* couples.

BACKGROUND

Individuals in the United States have become increasingly receptive to lesbian and gay rights across a range of legal issues, including service in the military, adoption rights, and employment nondiscrimination laws (Brewer 2003; Loftus 2001; Yang 1997). Correspondingly, civil rights are the focus of most survey research. This focus may also reflect the gay rights movement's emphasis on civil rights. However, support for formal rights does not necessarily mean that people have favorable attitudes toward lesbians and gays in all domains. Indeed, models of political attitude formation suggest that such attitudes are complex and multidimensional (Steeh and Krysan 1996). We now turn our attention to research on modern prejudice, an area that examines multiple dimensions of racial and gender prejudice.

Modern Prejudice

Research in political sociology and modern prejudice demonstrates that prejudice today often takes new forms that are not easily detected by traditional attitudinal measures of prejudice. For instance, new racism is a theoretical paradigm that arose out of the need to explain why racial inequality persists despite the achievement of formal rights for non-whites.² This line of research focuses on the subtle forms of racism that undergird modern day racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Kinder and Sears 1981; Pettigrew and Meertens 1995). An illustrative example of this discrepancy in people's attitudes is the paradoxical finding that although individuals in the United States support racial equality in principle, they still hold negative stereotypes about blacks that perpetuate racial inequality (Kluegel 1990; Schuman et al. 1997). Recognizing this inconsistency, scholars argue that racial prejudice today is multidimensional, fluid, and operates in contextually adaptive

ways (Dixon, Durrheim, and Tredoux 2007; Krysan 2000). Similarly, new sexism scholars contend that old-fashioned forms of sexism tend to be blatant, whereas modern forms tend to be subtle (Glick and Fiske 1996; Swim et al. 1995).

Like modern prejudice scholars, researchers studying homophobia contend that empirical distinctions can be made between old-fashioned homonegativity and modern homonegativity (Jewell and Morrison 2012). They find that old-fashioned homonegativity is rooted in religious and moral objections to homosexuality, whereas modern homonegativity is grounded in beliefs that lesbians and gays are making illegitimate demands for social change; such modern beliefs assume that discrimination has disappeared. Furthermore, researchers find that old-fashioned homonegativity is no longer endorsed, at least among students (Morrison and Morrison 2003).

Similar to other modern prejudice scholars, we view sexual prejudice as multidimensional. Formal rights are only one domain in a larger set of attitudes toward homosexuality. For example, past research suggests that items concerning the formal rights of lesbians and gays likely tap into beliefs about egalitarianism, whereas items concerning the morality of homosexuality may tap into long-standing puritanical beliefs (Loftus 2001). We add to this literature by examining another domain: informal privileges. In doing so, we gain leverage in understanding the attitudes that underlie contemporary inequality.

Our approach differs from research on modern homonegativity and other modern prejudice scholarship in three major ways. First, we contend that moral and religious objections to the rights of lesbians and gays have not actually disappeared (see also Lottes and Grollman 2010). Indeed, data from a variety of sources show that lesbians and gays are still vulnerable to hate crimes (Herek and Berrill 1992), harassment (Kosciw et al. 2012), discrimination (Peplau and Fingerhut 2007), and familial rejection (Kaiser Family Foundation 2001).

Second, although modern prejudice informs our conceptualization of formal

rights and informal privileges, the evidence does not necessarily warrant the claim that prejudice toward lesbians and gays based on formal rights has fallen out of favor. Thus, the question of whether individuals in the United States are less willing to grant formal rights to lesbians and gays remains an empirical one that we will explore in this article.

Third, unlike much other work in modern prejudice, we move beyond a focus on the dominant group's perceptions. Instead, we use theories of intergroup competition to explain motivations underlying sexual prejudice for *all* sexual identity groups. In doing so, we are able to make predictions regarding heterosexuals' as well as sexual minorities' attitudes toward members of their in- and out-groups. This study is the first of its kind to use a nationally representative sample to assess lesbians' and gays' views of their own relationships and those of their heterosexual counterparts.

Formal Rights and Informal Privileges

We conceptualize formal rights as the legal benefits on which research on attitudes toward homosexuality has traditionally focused; these entail legal protections that privileged groups often receive, such as partnership benefits that U.S. law confers on married couples. In McIntosh's (2003) discussion of "conferred dominance," she notes that advantaged groups often accrue more power and resources than do disadvantaged groups. In line with this idea, we use "formal rights" to denote legal protections that the government grants to privileged groups. Operationally, we analyze several partnership benefits as one measure of formal rights.

In contrast to formal rights, informal privileges represent interactional advantages that dominant groups receive over minority groups. These advantages are not legally conferred but arise in interactional settings as a way for the dominant group to maintain superiority over minority groups. Informal privileges are important to consider because they

sustain the belief that socially advantaged groups are inherently superior. They are analogous to what McIntosh (2003) calls “unearned advantages” and include privileges like feeling safe and comfortable in public spaces and belonging to a group whose subculture is considered legitimate. Informal privileges assume that characteristics of the privileged group should be taken as the societal norm (Warner 1993; Wildman 2005). As such, informal privileges tend to be subtler than formal rights. However, it is theoretically possible for informal privileges to be blatant and for formal rights to be subtle.

We use the acceptability of a couple’s public displays of affection, which occurs at the interactional level, as one measure of informal privileges. Through nonverbal behaviors such as handholding, hugging, or kissing, couples signal their relationship status to outsiders. However, such public displays of affection are not tolerated equally for all relationship types. For example, compared to intraracial couples, interracial couples are not as likely to exhibit public displays of affection, but they are similar to intraracial couples in sharing affection privately (Vaquera and Kao 2005). Similarly, qualitative studies reveal that lesbians and gays are denied public visibility and recognition through others’ rejection of their public displays of affection (Donovan, Heaphy, and Weeks 1999; Johnson 2002; Steinbugler 2005). Together, these findings suggest that non-normative couples experience barriers to their public acceptance.

The items we use for formal rights and informal privileges are not meant to be exhaustive and constitute only a few examples of possible measures. Other measures of formal rights for lesbians and gays might include protection from discrimination in the workplace, the right to serve in the military, and the right to adopt children. Other examples of informal privileges that lesbians and gays may lack include being able to reveal their sexual orientation to others (Franke and Leary 1991), having others consider their family form as socially legitimate (Powell et al. 2010), feeling safe from violence and harassment in public (Herek and Berrill

1992), and receiving high performance expectations in task groups (Johnson 1995).

However, some items do not neatly belong to one category or the other; marriage may be one such case. Marriage is conceptually a formal right, but empirically, people may have different ideas about it. Indeed, some scholars contend that the symbolic aspects of marriage—such as commitment, interdependence, and emotional fulfillment—are just as important as the legal and formal aspects (Cherlin 2004). The discourse surrounding the marriage debate illustrates this ambiguity. Advocates for same-sex marriage often frame marriage as a civil rights issue (Kitzinger and Wilkinson 2004), whereas opponents rarely do so (Pizmony-Levy and Ponce 2013; Powell 2013). Thus, we empirically examine whether marriage fits more closely with the formal rights or informal privilege items.

Intergroup Relations

In addition to comparing heterosexuals’ attitudes toward formal rights and informal privileges, we examine variations in attitudes based on sexual identity. Two general possibilities exist regarding variations in attitudes. First, there are compelling reasons to expect few group differences in attitudes toward same-sex couples. Heteronormativity, as a system of cultural beliefs, communicates that heterosexuality should be privileged (Warner 1993). Indeed, children often receive heteronormative socialization from an early age (Martin 2009). This socialization may lead lesbians and gays to harbor negative feelings about themselves (Herek, Gillis, and Cogan 2009). Furthermore, these cultural norms and beliefs are likely internalized by everyone, irrespective of sexual identity.

Alternatively, theories that focus on intergroup relations suggest there *will* be differences in attitudes among various sexual identity groups. We draw on two such theories, group position theory (Blumer 1958) and social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1986) to explain motivations underlying sexual prejudice. Although they do not produce

competing predictions, we use both theories because together they provide a clearer interpretation of our findings.

Group position theory (GPT). GPT views prejudice as a general orientation toward an out-group based on normative beliefs about the rightful position of one's own group in relation to the out-group (Blumer 1958; Bobo and Hutchings 1996). Combining elements of group identity, affect, and group interests, the GPT framework considers the structural and historical legacies of minority group disadvantage. From this perspective, prejudice must be continually justified. GPT thus argues that the dominant group will defend inequality on more subtle grounds as the political foundations of discrimination weaken (Bobo 1999).

Social identity theory (SIT). SIT assumes that individuals within groups are motivated to differentiate themselves from out-group members and to assess their in-group's value compared to the out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). In-group bias is a ubiquitous feature of intergroup relations, and social status is the outcome of intergroup comparison. Whether individuals directly compete with the out-group depends on their beliefs about the nature of the relationship between the in-group and the out-group. Individuals are most likely to compete with the out-group if they view relative standings as illegitimate and unstable.

A synthesis of GPT and SIT. Combining the focal points of emphasis in GPT and SIT produces a more comprehensive view of intergroup relations. GPT emphasizes different historical trajectories between groups and a sense of entitled superiority, but it does not explicitly address how group-based categorizations are formed or why they are such strong predictors of prejudice. SIT explicitly deals with the formation of social identities and how individuals categorize themselves into social groups, but it does not fully address the shared histories between groups.

Our synthesis draws on both theories' strengths and argues the following. First, individuals identify with others within the same social group if they share attributes that distinguish them from other groups. Second, individuals are motivated to maintain a positive and distinctive group identity, but their strategies for competition are dependent on larger cultural norms. Third, the dominant group within a society will have an entitled sense of superiority compared to the subordinate group. Note that neither formal rights nor informal privileges qualify as scarce resources. Thus, one might not predict competition along these dimensions. However, GPT recognizes that dominant groups are generally characterized by an entitled superiority that may lead to competition over a perceived threat to their "proprietary" claim over societal resources (Bobo 1999). These include tangible resources like land, jobs, and power, but also intangible benefits like "the claim to certain areas of intimacy and privacy" (Blumer 1958:4). While it is beyond the scope of this article to formally integrate GPT and SIT, we use this synthesis and theories of modern prejudice to formulate our hypotheses.

HYPOTHESES

Formal Rights

Some evidence suggests that opposition to lesbian and gay rights is on the decline (Loftus 2001), but it remains unclear whether patterns of sexual inequality for formal rights parallel those of racial and gender inequality. Our two theoretical perspectives, intergroup relations and modern prejudice, differ in their empirical predictions here. For this reason, we begin by offering competing hypotheses for heterosexuals' attitudes toward formal rights. We do not do so for Hypotheses 2 through 6, where theories of intergroup relations and modern prejudice converge in their predictions.

If existing laws that favor heterosexual couples over same-sex couples are any indication, we might expect heterosexuals to be more supportive of partnership benefits and

marriage for heterosexual couples than they are for same-sex couples.³ Furthermore, we would expect heterosexuals to deny formal rights to same-sex couples if they believe their own social standing is threatened. In line with theories of group threat, this leads us to predict the following:

Hypothesis 1a: Heterosexuals are significantly more approving of formal rights for heterosexual couples than for same-sex couples.

Theories of modern prejudice, however, emphasize the decline of blatant prejudice in favor of subtler forms of prejudice. Recall that prejudice based on formal rights tends to be more blatant, and prejudice based on informal privileges tends to be subtler. This reasoning, consistent with theories of modern prejudice, leads us to expect no differences in heterosexuals' willingness to grant formal rights to heterosexual versus same-sex unmarried couples. Indeed, evidence shows that "traditional prejudice," in the form of supporting racial segregation in housing and education, has declined sharply since the 1970s (Kluegel 1990). If sexual prejudice follows the same pattern, legalistic forms of discrimination against lesbians and gays may now be less prevalent. Because of this, heterosexuals may no longer feel they have a "proprietary" claim over formal rights (Bobo 1999). Furthermore, larger cultural norms about equality and civil rights may deter intergroup competition over formal rights. Because formal rights likely tap into culturally endorsed egalitarian values (Rokeach and Ball-Rokeach 1989), the legitimacy of denying formal rights to same-sex couples may be less acceptable today. Therefore, heterosexuals might not differentiate between heterosexual and same-sex couples in their approval of formal rights:

Hypothesis 1b: There are no differences in heterosexuals' approval of formal rights for heterosexual versus same-sex couples.

Historically, only heterosexual couples have enjoyed the partnership benefits about

which we ask in our study. Because marriage and all of its attendant benefits are not fully available to same-sex couples at present, lesbians and gays may be more approving of formal rights for same-sex couples because they find this unequal standing threatening to their group identity. The instability of individuals' support for these formal rights, especially given the unprecedented liberalization in the United States, only makes competition more likely (Tajfel and Turner 1986). This leads to Hypothesis 2:

Hypothesis 2: Lesbians and gays are significantly more approving of formal rights for in-group couples than for heterosexual couples.

Little empirical work explicitly examines whether lesbians and gays treat each other as in-group or out-group members. There is also some ambiguity regarding lesbians' and gays' in-group construction, because in-group membership could be based primarily on sexuality *or* gender. Thus, regarding lesbians' and gays' attitudes toward other same-sex couples (i.e., lesbians' attitudes toward gay couples and gays' attitudes toward lesbian couples), these predictions depend on the context in which lesbians and gays interpret their intergroup relations. This remains an open empirical question that we aim to resolve in the article.

Research suggests that prior to the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the gay liberation movement was largely segregated by gender. Although lesbian and gay organizations collaborated, there were sometimes gendered tensions between these groups (Adam 1987; Weeks 1985). Frictions between the gay rights movement and the feminist movement in the 1970s reflected this continued gender segregation (Armstrong 2002; Stein 1997; Weeks 1985). These gendered tensions suggest that lesbians and gays may treat each other as out-group members. However, the advent of HIV and AIDS in the 1980s resulted in some women playing a larger role in the gay rights movement (Gamson 1989). Furthermore, lesbians and gays now collectively

advocate for rights. Therefore, despite gender tensions in the past, contemporary evidence suggests that lesbians and gays may construct their in-group membership primarily based on sexuality rather than gender:

Hypothesis 3: There are no differences in lesbians' and gays' approval of formal rights for in-group couples versus other same-sex couples.

Informal Privileges

Regardless of whether egalitarian values motivate individuals in the United States to confer legal rights to lesbians and gays, ideas about the moral inferiority of lesbians and gays may still guide social interactions. Research on modern prejudice is an illustrative, although imperfect, parallel to sexual inequality. This literature suggests that some forms of prejudice persist even after people are generally willing to confer legal protections for racial minorities and women (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Swim et al. 1995). Thus, heterosexuals might grant formal rights to same-sex couples as much as to heterosexual couples, but their approval of informal privileges may lag behind. Therefore, we expect the following:

Hypothesis 4: Heterosexuals are significantly more approving of informal privileges for heterosexual couples than for same-sex couples.

In contrast, because of the broader social acceptance of heterosexual couples, lesbians and gays are not likely to differentiate between heterosexual couples and couples in their in-group. Even if lesbians and gays view their relative standing as illegitimate with regard to informal privileges, they may focus on competing for formal rights, where social mobility is more likely (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Social mobility is more likely for formal rights because of countervailing forces such as egalitarian ideals and social movements that focus on civil rights. Such oppositional

forces are less salient for informal privileges. This leads to Hypothesis 5:

Hypothesis 5: There are no differences between lesbians' and gays' approval of informal privileges for heterosexual couples versus couples in their in-group.

Consistent with our hypotheses for formal rights, we predict no differences in lesbians' and gays' approval of informal privileges for in-group couples versus other same-sex couples. Therefore, we predict the following:

Hypothesis 6: There are no differences in lesbians' and gays' approval of informal privileges for in-group couples versus other same-sex couples.

METHODS

Data

To test these hypotheses, we use a nationally representative dataset collected by GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks) with support from Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS) (Freese and Visser 2010).⁴ Participants for the study came from a random subset of the GfK panel, which was recruited using a combination of list-assisted random-digit dial (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methods. The study was fielded in December 2010. To ensure an adequate number of lesbians and gays, we oversample them in the study.⁵ In all, our survey includes 258 lesbian, 310 gay, 240 heterosexual female, and 265 heterosexual male respondents, for a sample size of 1,073.

Design

We assigned respondents to one of three vignette conditions using a randomized block design so there were roughly equal numbers of respondents in each sexual identity group in each vignette condition. In each condition, respondents were presented with a vignette featuring an unmarried couple who were currently cohabiting.⁶ Couples differed only in

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents across Conditions

		Experimental Condition			Total
		Heterosexual Couple Vignette	Gay Couple Vignette	Lesbian Couple Vignette	
Respondent's Sexual Identity	Lesbian respondent	87	79	92	258
	Gay respondent	104	102	104	310
	Heterosexual female respondent	90	81	69	240
	Heterosexual male respondent	89	84	92	265
Total		370	346	357	1,073

relationship form: lesbian, gay, or heterosexual. After reading the vignette, respondents were asked to answer questions about their perceptions of the couple. The heterosexual couple vignette, for example, read:

Brian and Jennifer met three years ago and were immediately attracted to each other. After going on a few dates, Brian told Jennifer that he wanted to see her exclusively, to which Jennifer happily agreed; they've been together ever since. Although Brian and Jennifer have had serious arguments, they both report being happy when they are together. Brian and Jennifer feel complete trust in each other. In fact, they've lived together for the past two years.

The italicized portions were manipulated based on the vignette condition assigned.⁷ "Brian and Jennifer" and their respective pronouns were replaced with "Heather and Jennifer" in the lesbian couple condition and "Brian and Matt" in the gay couple condition.^{8,9} The precise wording of the vignette presented to respondents in each condition can be found in Part 1 of the online supplement (<http://asr.sagepub.com/supplemental>). Table 1 summarizes the number of respondents in each vignette condition.

Outcome Measures

We use approval of partnership benefits and acceptability of the couple's public displays of

affection as our measures of formal rights and informal privileges, respectively. We adapted our formal rights measures from questions asked by Powell and colleagues (2010) in their survey of conceptions of family in the United States. These questions include whether the couple should be granted partnership benefits, such as family leave, hospital visitation, inheritance rights, and insurance benefits for the other partner. For these questions, we presented the couple in a hypothetical scenario (see the Appendix), and then asked whether partnership benefits that married couples routinely receive should be granted to the couple.

We assess the approval of informal privileges for the couple by gauging the acceptability of the couple's public displays of affection. These items include the ability to tell others they are in a relationship, hold hands in a park, kiss on the cheek in a park, and French kiss in a park.

Little quantitative work systematically examines reactions to public displays of affection among same-sex couples, and the ones that do often use cursory measures (Davies 2004; Lim 2002). Other quantitative studies focus on regions outside the United States, such as the Netherlands (Adolfsen, Iedema, and Keuzenkamp 2010) and Canada (Altemeyer 2001). Taken together, our measures of public displays of affection allow us to consider how heterosexual couples may enjoy informal privileges over same-sex couples.

Finally, we examine attitudes toward marriage rights. Although marriage is typically

Table 2. Description of Unweighted Dependent Measures

Name	Mean (all vignettes)	SD (all vignettes)	N	Heterosexual Couple Vignette	Lesbian Couple Vignette	Gay Couple Vignette
Family Leave	3.373	.855	1,070	3.273 ^a	3.445 ^c	3.406
Hospital Visitation	3.627	.694	1,069	3.612	3.654	3.613
Inheritance Rights	3.241	.966	1,066	3.022 ^{ab}	3.383 ^c	3.329 ^c
Insurance Benefits	3.181	1.043	1,069	2.913 ^{ab}	3.344 ^c	3.301 ^c
Tell Others	3.479	.826	1,070	3.638 ^{ab}	3.420 ^c	3.371 ^c
Hold Hands	3.397	.887	1,069	3.745 ^{ab}	3.335 ^{bc}	3.090 ^{ac}
Kiss on Cheek	3.328	.940	1,072	3.727 ^{ab}	3.291 ^{bc}	2.939 ^{ac}
French Kiss	2.124	1.029	1,072	2.404 ^{ab}	2.059 ^c	1.893 ^c
Marriage	3.445	.992	1,069	3.875 ^{ab}	3.278 ^c	3.159 ^c

Note: $N = 1,073$. Descriptive statistics do not include survey weights.

^aSignificantly different from lesbian couple vignette ($p < .05$; two-tailed test).

^bSignificantly different from gay couple vignette ($p < .05$; two-tailed test).

^cSignificantly different from heterosexual couple vignette ($p < .05$; two-tailed test).

conceptualized as a formal right, it remains empirically unclear whether it has characteristics of both formal rights and informal privileges. Therefore, we examine marriage in its own section. Additionally, we use exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to examine whether, in the United States, individuals' views toward marriage more closely correspond to their views toward formal rights or informal privileges. We present unweighted descriptive statistics for each question in Table 2, weighted descriptive statistics in Table S5A in the online supplement, and question wording in the Appendix. Together, these questions were designed to examine whether, to what extent, and on which dimensions respondents differentiate among heterosexual, lesbian, and gay unmarried couples. For each item, response choices range from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (4).

Predictors

Sexual identity × vignette interaction-indicators. The primary independent variables in the analyses are 11 interaction-indicators for each combination of sexual identity by vignette condition (e.g., lesbian respondents' attitudes toward the heterosexual couple). Heterosexual males' attitudes toward the heterosexual couple serve as the reference category. Using this indicator coding scheme,

rather than the traditional full factorial of the two variables (i.e., main effects for vignette condition and sexual identity group with their interactions) simplifies testing of our hypotheses; however, the two coding schemes are mathematically equivalent.

Sociodemographics. Because respondents are randomly assigned to a vignette condition, any sociodemographic differences that would bias the results should wash out (Maxwell and Delaney 2004). However, we include sociodemographic controls in supplemental analyses because prior research shows that age (Avery et al. 2007), race (Lewis 2003), gender (Meaney and Rye 2010), marital status (Kunkel and Temple 1992), having children (Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera 2006), education (Kozloski 2010), income (Andersen and Fetner 2008), political affiliation (Schwartz 2010), and religion¹⁰ (Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006) affect attitudes toward homosexuality. We present descriptive statistics for our unweighted sample in Table 3 and weighted descriptive statistics in Table S5B of the online supplement.¹¹

Analytic Strategy

We begin by examining the underlying structure of our nine outcomes using EFA. This

Table 3. Unweighted Sample Descriptive Statistics

Name	Definition	Sample Descriptive
Sexual Identity Group		
Lesbian respondent	Lesbian female respondent (1 = Yes)	24.04%
Gay respondent	Gay male respondent (1 = Yes)	28.89%
Heterosexual female respondent	Heterosexual female respondent (1 = Yes)	22.37%
Heterosexual male respondent (reference category)	Heterosexual male respondent (1 = Yes)	24.70%
Age	Respondent's age in years (18 to 91)	50.633 (14.579)
White (vs. non-white)	White respondent (1 = Yes)	77.35%
Education		
Less than high school (reference category)	Respondent's highest degree received is less than a high school diploma (1 = Yes)	6.24%
High school	Respondent's highest degree received is a high school diploma (1 = Yes)	48.56%
College or more	Respondent's highest degree received is at least a bachelor's degree (1 = Yes)	45.20%
At least \$50,000 (vs. less than \$50,000)	Respondent's household income is at least \$50,000 a year (1 = Yes)	56.29%
Married (vs. unmarried)	Respondent is married or living with a part- ner (1 = Yes)	55.08%
Children	At least one child lives with the respondent (1 = Yes)	18.17%
Number of Children	The number of children under age 18 living with the respondent	.312 (.774)
Political Ideology	Political ideology (1 through 7; extremely liberal to extremely conservative)	3.417 (1.556)
Religion		
Evangelical	Evangelical respondent (1 = Yes)	21.25%
Mainline Protestant	Mainline Protestant respondent (1 = Yes)	19.66%
Black Protestant	Black Protestant respondent (1 = Yes)	5.69%
Catholic	Catholic respondent (1 = Yes)	19.57%
Other affiliation	Respondent reports a religious affiliation other than Evangelical, Mainline Protes- tant, Black Protestant, or Catholic (1 = Yes)	11.28%
No affiliation (reference category)	Respondent reports no religious affiliation (1 = Yes)	22.55%

Note: $N = 1,073$. Sample descriptives do not include survey weights. Standard deviations in parentheses for continuous variables.

analysis allows us to examine whether people treat these nine outcomes as indicators of formal rights and informal privileges. Crucially, it allows us to see if individuals treat marriage as more similar to formal rights or informal privileges. After this preliminary analysis, we estimate ordered logistic regression models for each outcome.¹² Tests of significance for each coefficient tell us if there are significant differences between a given

coefficient and heterosexual males' attitudes toward the heterosexual couple (the omitted category). Additionally, we use Wald tests to examine differences between coefficients across respondent categories (Liao 2004). This allows us to examine whether there are significant differences between the heterosexual vignette and the lesbian or gay vignette for respondent categories other than heterosexual male (i.e., heterosexual females,

lesbians, and gays). These post-estimation tests also allow us to examine differences between the lesbian vignette and the gay vignette; they are important for our hypotheses concerning whether lesbians and gays treat each other as part of the same in-group or as members of the out-group.

We present unweighted results without sociodemographic controls in the main text. The full tables of coefficients for models with sociodemographic controls are in Tables S2, S3, and S4 and with survey weights in Tables S5D, S5E, and S5F in the online supplement. Inclusion of the controls does not alter the substantive patterns found in the models; neither does inclusion of survey weights. Only age, political ideology, and religious affiliation are consistently significant, all of which have negative effects.¹³ Consistent with past work, older, more conservative, and Evangelical respondents are generally less supportive of formal rights and informal privileges than are younger, more liberal, and religiously unaffiliated respondents.

RESULTS

Factor Analysis of Items

We use EFA to investigate the structure underlying the nine outcome measures in this study. Because our measures are ordinal rather than continuous, we use the polychoric correlation matrix (Olsson 1979), which is more suitable for ordinal measures than is the commonly used Pearson correlation matrix. We retain the two factors that have eigenvalues above 1. Additionally, a two-factor solution leads to conceptually clear factors based on the items that load most highly onto each factor.

Table 4 includes rotated factor loadings, communalities (h^2), eigenvalues, and percent of variance for each factor. Given our interest in group differences between sexual minorities and heterosexuals, we include factor analyses for our full sample, for heterosexuals, and for lesbians and gays. Communalities for the items for the full sample as well as the subgroups are high, suggesting these items are reliable indicators of the factors. Combined, the two factors

account for 99 percent of the variance in the original items for the full sample and the heterosexual subsample, and 91 percent of the variance for the lesbian and gay subsample. As Table 4 (full sample) shows, the public displays of affection items and marriage load most highly onto the first factor, which we call informal privileges. The partnership benefit items all load highly onto the second factor, formal rights. As expected, partnership benefits tap into formal rights, whereas public displays of affection tap into informal privileges. However, marriage loads more highly onto informal privileges for the full sample. Although it is conceptually a formal right, individuals in the United States as a whole seem to *treat it* more similarly to an informal privilege.

However, separate analyses of heterosexuals and sexual minorities reveal two interesting group differences. First, telling others about the couple's relationship status cross-loads as a formal right for the full sample and the heterosexual subsample, but not for the lesbian and gay subsample. Although all respondents view telling others similarly to public displays of affection, heterosexuals seem to *also* view it akin to a partnership benefit. In contrast, lesbians and gays do not seem to view this openness about one's relationship like they do other formal, legal rights.

Second, while the heterosexual subsample is largely similar to the full sample, the lesbian and gay subsamples treat marriage more equivocally. Marriage loads more highly onto informal privileges (.564), but it also loads highly onto formal rights (.452). This contrasts with findings in the heterosexual subsample (.809 versus .297). In essence, lesbians and gays treat marriage as *both* a formal right and an informal privilege.¹⁴ This empirical ambiguity regarding marriage and telling others about the couple's relationship status is not problematic for our analyses, because we examine each item separately rather than scaling them together.

Approval of Formal Rights

Table 5 includes results from ordered logistic regressions of approval of each of the formal

Table 4. Summary of Unweighted Exploratory Factor Analysis Results Using Principal Factors Method and Varimax Rotation

	Informal Privileges			Formal Rights			h^2	
	Full Sample	Heterosexuals	Lesbians and Gays	Full Sample	Heterosexuals	Lesbians and Gays	Full Sample	Heterosexuals and Gays
Family Leave	.319	.313	.214	.749	.731	.671	.697	.670
Hospital Visitation	.375	.355	.328	.850	.806	.906	.898	.828
Inheritance Rights	.237	.241	.102	.881	.838	.909	.845	.787
Insurance Benefits	.272	.274	.014	.881	.823	.946	.867	.778
Tell Others	.739	.747	.756	.487	.453	.295	.825	.809
Hold Hands	.934	.942	.972	.290	.310	.116	.957	.985
Kiss on Cheek	.938	.960	.914	.249	.208	.099	.950	.974
French Kiss	.596	.625	.438	.098	.127	.022	.503	.544
Marry	.719	.809	.564	.491	.297	.452	.767	.750
Eigenvalue	5.791	5.515	2.008	1.243	1.281	4.543		
Percent of Variance	81.81	80.43	28.00	17.56	18.68	63.36		

Note: Factor analysis done using polychoric correlation matrix. Factor loadings greater than .4 appear in bold.

Table 5. Unweighted Results from Ordered Logits of Approval of Formal Rights on Respondent's Sexual Identity by Vignettes

	Family Leave	Hospital Visitation	Inheritance	Insurance Benefits
Heterosexual Male Respondent				
× Lesbian vignette	-.111 (.270)	-.323 (.271)	.055 (.268)	.339 (.266)
× Gay vignette	-.266 (.279)	-.442 (.269)	.033 (.271)	.213 (.270)
Heterosexual Female Respondent				
× Heterosexual vignette	.212 (.249)	.604* (.289)	.284 (.247)	.290 (.241)
× Lesbian vignette	.467 (.282)	.498 (.316)	.738** (.286)	.896**+ (.268)
× Gay vignette	.112 (.276)	.164 (.302)	.569 (.293)	.823** (.287)
Lesbian Respondent				
× Heterosexual vignette	.916** (.271)	1.494** (.327)	1.248** (.270)	1.832** (.276)
× Lesbian vignette	2.473**++ (.361)	3.063**++ (.547)	3.385**++ (.402)	4.209**++ (.448)
× Gay vignette	2.627**++ (.445)	3.214**++ (.615)	3.377**++ (.411)	4.458**++ (.547)
Gay Respondent				
× Heterosexual vignette	.751** (.247)	1.283** (.300)	1.058** (.259)	1.715** (.257)
× Lesbian vignette	1.812**++ (.312)	2.939**++ (.508)	2.956**++ (.336)	3.385**++ (.339)
× Gay vignette	2.341**++ (.334)	2.939**++ (.491)	2.652**++ (.314)	3.963**++ (.425)
τ_1	-2.252	-2.961	-1.449	-.957
τ_2	-1.193	-1.872	-.472	.155
τ_3	.597	-.024	1.187	1.528
<i>N</i>	1,070	1,069	1,066	1,069

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; significantly different from heterosexual male × heterosexual vignette (the omitted category) (two-tailed tests).

† $p < .05$; ++ $p < .01$; significantly different from the heterosexual vignette coefficient.

▲ $p < .05$; ▲▲ $p < .01$; lesbian vignette and gay vignette coefficients are significantly different from each other.

rights items on respondents' sexual identity by vignette condition. Several key findings emerge from this set of analyses. Across *all* of the formal rights items, we find no significant differences in heterosexual males' approval for the heterosexual, lesbian, or gay couple. Similarly, heterosexual females do not significantly differentiate between the heterosexual, lesbian, and gay couples, with one exception. Heterosexual females are significantly *more*

approving of *insurance benefits* for the lesbian couple than for the heterosexual couple ($\chi^2[1] = 5.00, p = .025$). Contrary to Hypothesis 1a, which predicts greater approval for the heterosexual couple, we find that, overall, heterosexuals are as willing to grant formal rights to the same-sex couple as they are to the heterosexual couple.

Second, both lesbians and gays are significantly more approving of *all* formal rights

items for the in-group couple than for the heterosexual couple. Lesbians are significantly more approving of family leave ($\chi^2[1] = 17.13, p < .001$), hospital visitation ($\chi^2[1] = 7.37, p < .001$), inheritance ($\chi^2[1] = 26.60, p < .001$), and insurance benefits ($\chi^2[1] = 26.02, p < .001$) for the lesbian couple than for the heterosexual couple. Lesbians are similarly significantly more approving of all items for the gay couple ($p < .01$ across items), suggesting that lesbians treat gay couples as in-group members. A more direct test of difference between lesbians' approval of the lesbian couple and the gay couple confirms this finding ($\chi^2[1] = .10, .51, < .001$, and $.17$, all *n.s.* for family leave, hospital visitation, inheritance, and insurance benefits, respectively).

This pattern is the same for gays. Gays are significantly more supportive of family leave ($\chi^2[1] = 23.35, p < .001$), hospital visitation ($\chi^2[1] = 10.30, p < .001$), inheritance ($\chi^2[1] = 26.85, p < .001$), and insurance benefits ($\chi^2[1] = 28.43, p < .001$) for the gay couple than for the heterosexual couple. They are also significantly more supportive of formal rights for the lesbian couple than for the heterosexual couple ($p < .01$ across items). Like lesbians, gays treat the lesbian couple similarly to the gay couple ($\chi^2[1] = 1.96, < .001, .66$, and 1.49 , all *n.s.* for family leave, hospital visitation, inheritance, and insurance benefits, respectively).

Lesbians' and gays' greater support for formal rights for same-sex couples clearly supports Hypothesis 2, which predicts greater approval for the in-group couple compared to the heterosexual couple. In terms of whether lesbians and gays perceive each other as in-group or out-group members, the lack of significant differences in their treatment of the other sexual minority couple compared to their in-group couple indicates they do indeed view each other as in-group members. This is consistent with Hypothesis 3, which predicts no differences in approval for the in-group couple compared to the other sexual minority couple. Interestingly, despite showing greater support for same-sex couples than for the heterosexual couple, lesbians and gays are significantly *more* approving of formal rights for the heterosexual couple than even

heterosexual males are. This suggests that lesbians and gays may be more sympathetic to cohabiting couples of all types, but especially to other same-sex couples.

Approval of Informal Privileges

Table 6 presents estimates from ordered logistic regression of approval of informal privileges. Unlike our findings with regard to formal rights, differences between approval of the lesbian couple and the gay couple start to emerge in these items, and there are also some inter-item differences. Beginning with heterosexual males' attitudes, we find clear evidence of sexual prejudice across *all* the informal privilege items. Heterosexual males are significantly less approving of informal privileges for both the lesbian couple and the gay couple than for the heterosexual couple ($p < .001$ across items). Comparing reactions to the gay couple and the lesbian couple, we find that heterosexual males are significantly less approving of the gay couple holding hands ($\chi^2[1] = 6.51, p < .05$), kissing on the cheek ($\chi^2[1] = 7.49, p < .01$), and French kissing ($\chi^2[1] = 6.51, p < .05$). That is, heterosexual males are less approving of informal privileges for both same-sex couples, but they are significantly less approving of the gay couple than of the lesbian couple.

Heterosexual females are similarly less approving of the lesbian and gay couples' informal privileges than of the heterosexual couple's ($p < .01$ across items). Unlike heterosexual males, however, heterosexual females are *not* significantly less approving of the gay couple compared to the lesbian couple, with the exception of kissing on the cheek ($\chi^2[1] = 7.10, p < .01$). Together with the findings for heterosexual males, these findings lend support to Hypothesis 4, which predicts heterosexuals will be less approving of informal privileges for same-sex couples than for heterosexual couples.

Contrary to Hypothesis 5, we find that lesbians and gays sometimes are more willing to grant informal privileges to heterosexual couples over their own in-group couple. Beginning with lesbians' and gays' attitudes toward their in-group couple compared to the

Table 6. Unweighted Results from Ordered Logits of Approval of Informal Privileges on Respondent's Sexual Identity by Vignettes

	Tell Others	Hold Hands	Kiss on Cheek	French Kiss
Heterosexual Male Respondent				
× Lesbian vignette	-1.136** (.286)	-1.534**▲ (.301)	-1.775**▲▲ (.291)	-1.197**▲ (.276)
× Gay vignette	-1.306** (.288)	-2.303**▲ (.314)	-2.579**▲▲ (.309)	-1.988**▲ (.294)
Heterosexual Female Respondent				
× Heterosexual vignette	.099 (.287)	.339 (.327)	.141 (.319)	-.576* (.256)
× Lesbian vignette	-.735*†† (.305)	-1.373**†† (.310)	-1.579**††▲▲ (.297)	-1.477**†† (.291)
× Gay vignette	-1.073**†† (.291)	-1.963**†† (.310)	-2.395**††▲▲ (.314)	-1.999**†† (.298)
Lesbian Respondent				
× Heterosexual vignette	1.499** (.381)	.925* (.377)	.509 (.338)	-.526* (.256)
× Lesbian vignette	1.429** (.389)	.044† (.333)	.037 (.328)	-.715* (.283)
× Gay vignette	1.494** (.384)	-.053† (.324)	-.449†† (.309)	-.753** (.287)
Gay Respondent				
× Heterosexual vignette	.647* (.294)	.457 (.328)	.616 (.334)	-.149 (.243)
× Lesbian vignette	.851** (.317)	-.056 (.314)	.051▲ (.317)	-.597*† (.237)
× Gay vignette	.876** (.309)	-.610*†† (.294)	-.788**††▲ (.293)	-.656**† (.249)
τ_1	-3.053	-3.532	-3.504	-1.507
τ_2	-2.210	-2.568	-2.563	-.131
τ_3	-.435	-.927	-.946	1.212
N	1,070	1,069	1,072	1,072

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; significantly different from heterosexual male × heterosexual vignette (the omitted category) (two-tailed tests).

† $p < .05$; †† $p < .01$; significantly different from the heterosexual vignette coefficient.

▲ $p < .05$; ▲▲ $p < .01$; lesbian vignette and gay vignette coefficients are significantly different from each other.

heterosexual couple, we find they are equally as approving of the in-group couple telling others they are a couple as they are of the heterosexual couple doing so. However, both lesbians ($\chi^2[1] = 5.08$, $p < .05$ for lesbians' approval of the lesbian couple) and gays ($\chi^2[1] = 11.61$, $p < .01$ for gays' approval of the gay couple) are significantly *less* approving of the in-group couple holding hands in public compared to the heterosexual couple. Lesbians are not significantly different in

their approval of kissing on the cheek or French kissing for the lesbian couple versus the heterosexual couple. Gays, however, are significantly *less* approving of the gay couple kissing on the cheek ($\chi^2[1] = 19.63$, $p < .001$) and French kissing ($\chi^2[1] = 4.49$, $p < .05$) compared to the heterosexual couple.

Consistent with Hypothesis 6, we again find that lesbians and gays seem to treat each other as members of the same in-group. With the exception of gays' approval of kissing on

Table 7. Unweighted Results from Ordered Logits of Approval of Marriage on Respondent's Sexual Identity by Vignettes

	Marry
Heterosexual Male Respondent	
× Lesbian vignette	-2.621** (.331)
× Gay vignette	-2.964** (.346)
Heterosexual Female Respondent	
× Heterosexual vignette	.544 (.416)
× Lesbian vignette	-2.145*** (.338)
× Gay vignette	-2.538*** (.331)
Lesbian Respondent	
× Heterosexual vignette	1.780** (.637)
× Lesbian vignette	.682 (.430)
× Gay vignette	1.152* (.518)
Gay Respondent	
× Heterosexual vignette	.482 (.408)
× Lesbian vignette	.425 (.414)
× Gay vignette	-.054 (.354)
τ_1	-3.367
τ_2	-2.828
τ_3	-1.563
N	1,069

Note: Standard errors in parentheses.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; significantly different from heterosexual male × heterosexual vignette (the omitted category) (two-tailed tests).

† $p < .05$; †† $p < .01$; significantly different from the heterosexual vignette coefficient.

▲ $p < .05$; ▲▲ $p < .01$; lesbian vignette and gay vignette coefficients are significantly different from each other.

the cheek, where gays are *more* approving of the lesbian couple than of the gay couple ($\chi^2[1] = 7.51, p < .01$), lesbians and gays do not significantly differentiate between the lesbian and the gay couple.

Approval of Marriage

Table 7 includes results from ordered logistic regression of approval of marriage.

The patterns for marriage align more with the findings for informal privileges and are nearly the reverse of those for formal rights. Here, heterosexual males and females are significantly less approving of marriage for both the lesbian and the gay couple ($p < .001$ across items). These findings mirror the exploratory factor analysis, which found that marriage more closely aligns with informal privileges. In contrast, lesbians do not differentiate among

any of the couple types with regard to marriage. Lesbian respondents display no significant differences between the heterosexual couple and the lesbian couple ($\chi^2[1] = 2.63, n.s.$) or the gay couple ($\chi^2[1] = .73, n.s.$). Also, lesbians do not differentiate between the lesbian couple and the gay couple ($\chi^2[1] = .80, n.s.$). Gays show a similar pattern to lesbians. Gays do not significantly differ in their approval of marriage for the heterosexual, lesbian ($\chi^2[1] = .02, n.s.$), or gay ($\chi^2[1] = 1.81, n.s.$) couple, nor do they differentiate between the lesbian and gay couples ($\chi^2[1] = 1.42, n.s.$).

DISCUSSION

This article examines whether people in the United States are more willing to grant formal rights and informal privileges to heterosexual couples than to same-sex couples, whether their views regarding marriage better correspond to their views on formal rights or informal privileges, and whether these patterns vary across heterosexual, lesbian, and gay respondents. Drawing on theories of modern prejudice and intergroup relations, we hypothesize sexual identity group differences in attitudes. Our results indicate that heterosexuals do *not* favor heterosexual couples over same-sex couples when it comes to formal rights,¹⁵ but they are less approving of informal privileges for same-sex couples. These findings are consistent with other evidence of the increasing liberalization of attitudes toward lesbians and gays in the area of formal rights, potentially a consequence of the strides made by the gay rights movement. They also highlight the need to examine multiple attitudinal dimensions to elucidate the nature of modern prejudice toward lesbians and gays.

Our findings generally mirror patterns found in the modern prejudice literature on race and gender, offering some evidence that opposition to lesbians' and gays' formal rights will likely wane before informal types of prejudice do. Indeed, as some forms of structural discrimination are formally prohibited, informal privileges might become more important as a way for dominant groups to

justify inequality on more subtle grounds (Bobo 1999; Jackman 1994). Because the law is increasingly becoming a less viable mechanism for denying marginalized groups rights, social interaction has emerged as the site where dominant groups ensure they receive subtle advantages and informal privileges over minority groups (Harris 2001; Schwalbe et al. 2000). Our results underscore the need to consider informal privileges, because they represent less conspicuous advantages that heterosexual couples receive over same-sex couples. A sole focus on formal rights may overlook these other potentially subtle, yet important, aspects of marginalization.

We also find variations in attitudes based on social identity. Lesbians and gays are significantly *more* approving of formal rights for their in-group couple than for the heterosexual couple. Perhaps this is because lesbians and gays are more attuned to the fact that marriage is not as widely available to same-sex couples as it is to heterosexual couples. It would be interesting to see whether this pattern changes if same-sex marriages become legal nationwide.

Regarding informal privileges, heterosexuals are consistently less approving of these items for same-sex couples. In contrast, lesbians and gays do not exhibit in-group favoritism in attitudes. In fact, for some of the items (holding hands for lesbians and gays; kissing on the cheek and French kissing for gays), lesbians and gays are significantly *less approving* of the in-group couple compared to the heterosexual couple. This finding may be consistent with ideas of heteronormativity (Martin 2009; Warner 1993) and internalized stigma (Herek et al. 2009). Alternatively, if lesbians and gays are keenly aware of same-sex couples' vulnerability to homophobic hate crimes (Herek and Berrill 1992) and harassment (Kosciw et al. 2012), this lower level of approval may be due to safety concerns for the couple rather than internalized stigma or out-group favoritism.

The question of whether marriage is treated as a formal right or an informal privilege sheds some light on the divergence between

heterosexuals' and lesbians' or gays' attitudes for formal rights. Two sets of analyses for marriage reveal an underlying difference between heterosexuals and sexual minorities in what marriage means and how widely accessible marriage should be for different couples. First, the exploratory factor analysis shows that heterosexuals and sexual minorities treat marriage in different ways. Heterosexuals' responses regarding marriage more closely correspond to their responses regarding informal privileges, whereas lesbians and gays treat marriage similarly to both an informal privilege and a formal right. This finding is in line with past work that shows people in the United States view marriage as a symbolic indicator of commitment, interdependence, and emotional fulfillment (Cherlin 2004; Powell 2013). Lesbians' and gays' treatment of marriage as a formal right likely reflects their greater awareness of the more than 1,000 legal benefits that marriage confers (Lewin 2004). Despite these legal ramifications for marriage, heterosexuals' responses suggest the dominant group's ability to selectively construct the meaning of marriage to focus on its symbolic aspects.

Second, the multivariate analyses predicting attitudes toward marriage find that heterosexuals are much more likely to approve of marriage for the heterosexual couple than for the same-sex couples. This stands in stark contrast with their overall approval of formal rights and implies a "principle-implementation gap" (Kluegel 1990; Schuman et al. 1997). In other words, heterosexuals indicate a preference for the idea of formal equality for same-sex couples, but they do not support the policy that would actually implement these ideals. However, our first set of analyses show that this principle-implementation gap might be due to how heterosexuals view marriage. Rather than seeing it as an issue of formal legal protections, heterosexuals seem to view marriage as an informal privilege. As such, restrictions on marriage do not conflict with their egalitarian ideals about formal rights. Alternatively, it is possible that heterosexuals oppose same-sex marriage for moral reasons (McVeigh and Diaz 2009).

In a similar vein, we find that lesbians and gays do not differentiate among heterosexual and same-sex couples when it comes to marriage, despite being more supportive of partnership benefits for the in-group couple. This seemingly contradictory set of attitudes is consistent with our interpretations of lesbians' and gays' attitudes toward formal rights. The finding that lesbians and gays are not more supportive of marriage for the in-group couple suggests their higher levels of support for formal rights may not simply be due to pure in-group favoritism. Instead, lesbians and gays are likely more cognizant of the barriers to gaining partnership benefits for same-sex couples through marriage. Thus, their higher levels of support for partnership benefits may represent a desire to level the playing field for same-sex couples.

Several ancillary findings also have important implications for research on sexual prejudice. For formal rights and informal privileges, we find that lesbians and gays treat each other as part of the same in-group; this result stands in contrast to gender tensions in the gay rights movement in the past. However, other work shows that in-group construction may be context dependent (Okamoto 2003). Lesbians and gays may view each other as in-group members in this context due to their collective struggle for rights and social acceptance.

We also find a consistent, but not always significant, penalization of the gay couple compared to the lesbian couple across the informal privileges items. This is consistent with research that shows homophobia and enforcement of rigid notions of masculinity operate together (Pascoe 2007). Indeed, gay couples are likely penalized for perceptions that they violate masculinity norms. Much past work on sexual prejudice lumps lesbians and gays together (see also Herek 2000), but our findings suggest there may be important differences between lesbians and gays, which highlights the need to examine them separately.

Overall, our findings suggest a synergy among theories of modern prejudice, intergroup relations, and the distinction between formal rights and informal privileges in the

study of prejudice. Using these theories in tandem moves the modern prejudice literature beyond its focus on the dominant group, the intergroup relations literature beyond its focus on competition, and the attitudinal literature beyond its focus on civil rights. Indeed, we find that heterosexuals and sexual minorities hold different attitudes for in-group and out-group members. However, a pure intergroup competition model would have failed to predict heterosexuals' willingness to grant formal rights to same-sex couples. It also would not have predicted lesbians' and gays' equal and sometimes lower levels of approval of informal privileges for the in-group.

These results also have important implications for the gay rights movement. The civil rights frame as a movement tactic spilled over from other social movements partially as a result of right-wing opposition (Fetner 2001; Stone 2012; for a review of the movement, see Taylor et al. 2009).¹⁶ However, some scholars note that use of this master frame has not resulted in elimination of subtle forms of prejudice and discrimination for women and racial minorities (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Swim et al. 1995). The gay rights movement may thus need to adopt a number of other frames, strategies, and goals to eliminate more informal forms of sexual prejudice. Additionally, the movement may need to consider alternative tactics to gain partnership benefits, given that our results show many people oppose the policy (i.e., marriage) that confers them.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although our study has important theoretical and practical implications, it is not without limitations. The data are cross-sectional, and as such, we are unable to speak to changes in attitudes over time. Future work could supplement this research by documenting attitude changes for formal rights and, especially, informal privileges. Additionally, we cannot be certain that respondents identify with their sexual identity groups; however, studies have

demonstrated that high levels of identification are not necessary to exhibit in-group bias and that even trivial, nonsensical distinctions are sufficient for in-group bias to occur (Tajfel et al. 1971).

Despite its limitations, this study has a number of methodological advantages and contributes to understandings of sexual prejudice. One of the major strengths of the study is that it uses a recent, nationally representative survey and an experimental design, capitalizing on the advantages of both methods. We are thus able to make generalizable statements about the U.S. population as well as minimize the disadvantages of non-experimental survey research. Specifically, because respondents are presented with only one couple, the vignette allows us to reduce the desirability bias potentially introduced if respondents were asked to consider heterosexual and same-sex couples together, as in a non-experimental survey design. Our study is also the first of its kind to assess lesbians' and gays' views of their own relationships and those of their heterosexual counterparts.

Finally, the primary contribution of this article is that we further clarify the nature of prejudice toward lesbian and gay couples today. Although there is a tendency in the literature to consider the formal rights of lesbians and gays, we emphasize the need to consider the broader social acceptance of same-sex couples by examining informal privileges. We do so through offering a conceptualization of formal rights and informal privileges. In looking at informal privileges, we assess individuals' reactions to public displays of affection in different couple types. This distinction is necessary because political sociologists as well as modern prejudice scholars have found that prejudice is multidimensional, and thus our empirical examinations of prejudice should be as well. We are cautiously optimistic that making this distinction will help researchers better understand how and why inequality persists at the structural and interactional levels as minority groups achieve formal rights.

APPENDIX: QUESTION WORDING

Note: Items are reverse-coded in the analyses so that 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree. Items are presented in the order asked during the survey rather than the order presented in the analyses.

Tell others

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is okay for [couple members' names] to tell others that they are a couple?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Hold hands

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is okay for [couple members' names] to hold each other's hands in a park?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Kiss on cheek

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is okay for [couple members' names] to give each other a kiss on the cheek in a park?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

French kiss

To what extent do you agree or disagree that it is okay for [couple members' names] to French kiss in a park?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Family leave

Suppose that one of them is seriously ill. To what extent do you agree or disagree that [couple members' names] should be able to

take time off from work without being paid to take care of the sick partner?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Hospital visitation

Now suppose that one of them is hospitalized after a car accident. To what extent do you agree or disagree that [couple members' names] should have hospital visitation rights that parents, children, and husbands and wives have?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Inheritance rights

Now suppose that one of them dies unexpectedly, has no living relatives, and did not leave a last will and testament. To what extent do you agree or disagree that [couple members' names] should have inheritance rights similar to a husband and wife?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Insurance benefits

Now suppose that one of them works in an organization that provides health insurance benefits for married couples; the other one doesn't have health insurance. To what extent do you agree or disagree that [couple members' names] should have health insurance benefits for the partner?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Marriage

Now suppose that the couple wants to get married. To what extent do you agree or

disagree that [couple members' names] should be able to get legally married?

Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
1	2	3	4

Acknowledgments

We thank Arthur Alderson, Clem Brooks, Eric Anthony Grollman, Joseph B. Johnston, Thomas VanHeuvelen, Michael Vasseur, Martin Weinberg, and especially Stephen Benard, Brian Powell, the anonymous reviewers, and the *ASR* editors for insightful comments and excellent suggestions on various drafts of this article. This article was presented at Indiana University's Political, Economy, and Culture workshop, Sociological Research Practicum, and Social Stratification and Inequality Seminar. We thank members of the workshop and seminar for their valuable comments and suggestions.

Funding and Data

We gratefully acknowledge support from the National Science Foundation through a Graduate Research Fellowship to the first author (NSF Grant DGE-0813962) and the Williams Institute's Small Grants Program for this project. We thank Jack Martin for help with the Williams Institute grant. Data for this project were collected by Time-sharing Experiments for the Social Sciences (TESS), NSF Grant 0818839, and we thank the TESS PIs, Jeremy Freese and Penny Visser, and anonymous reviewers for their suggestions on our design. Opinions, findings, and conclusions presented in this article are ours and do not necessarily represent the views of any of these funding organizations.

Notes

1. Materials to replicate the results presented in this article and in the online supplement are available at <http://pages.iu.edu/~longdoan/frip.html>.
2. We use "new" and "modern" interchangeably in this article due to differences in terminology among the various subdisciplines that we review; however, they are not the same concepts. In general, "new" forms of prejudice are larger umbrella terms. For example, new racism includes approaches like modern racism, ambivalent racism, and aversive racism.
3. Although a majority of people in the United States now support same-sex marriage (Quinnipiac University 2013), only six states (including California) and Washington, DC, had legalized same-sex marriage when the study was fielded.
4. TESS conducts population-based experiments using the GfK panel with support from the National Science Foundation. See the GfK (<http://www.knowledgenetworks.com>) and TESS (<http://www.tessexperiments.org>) websites for more information.

5. About 350 lesbians and 480 gays were part of the GfK panel as of December 2010. To have an adequate sample size in these groups, it was necessary to sample same-sex households more than once in 49 cases. To account for intrahousehold correlations in these cases, we use cluster-robust standard errors in our analyses.
6. The couple is generally described as a happy, although not perfect, couple. We pretested the vignette in the summer of 2010 with a convenience sample to ensure the description of the couple was consistent with our conceptualization of a prototypical cohabiting couple.
7. We use "the couple" to generally denote the couple described in the vignette that a given respondent received regardless of the sexual identity of the couple. We use the more specific "heterosexual couple" to refer to Brian and Jennifer, "lesbian couple" to refer to Heather and Jennifer, and "gay couple" to refer to Brian and Matt when making reference to a particular vignette condition.
8. We designed the names to reduce any confounding effects due to perceived age and racial differences between the partners. In doing so, we can more directly examine the effects of sexual identity, but as a result, we are unable to speak to how age and racial differences between partners may moderate the effects of sexual orientation.
9. To reduce the possibility of the order of names confounding the results, the first person (Brian, Heather, and Brian, respectively) asks out the second person (Jennifer, Jennifer, and Matt, respectively) in each vignette. This paints the heterosexual couple as a traditional couple, with the male partner asking the female partner to date him, which is a purposeful attempt to reduce bias in the results from any negative attitudes toward nontraditional gender roles.
10. We coded religious affiliation using a modified version of Steensland and colleagues' (2000) RELTRAD. The prevalence and demographic makeup of these religious groups are largely similar to those found in the 2010 General Social Survey. Simpler coding schemes and including religious attendance as a separate variable do not substantively alter the results (see Part 7 of the online supplement for more details).
11. We include unweighted descriptives and models in the main text; however, Part 5 of the online supplement includes weighted descriptives and results. Part 5 of the online supplement also includes more discussion of the treatment of survey weights in the analyses. The substantive conclusions of the article remain the same regardless of survey weights.
12. We also estimated OLS, generalized ordered logit, and multinomial logit models as a form of robustness checks (see Part 6 of the online supplement for more details). The substantive conclusions of the article remain the same regardless of the model.

13. We also estimated models with interaction terms between sociodemographic predictors and vignette condition. These controls were inconsistently significant across models. Only 24 of these 252 interaction terms were significant at conventional levels. Of these, only the effects of income and education seem to be consistently moderated by the vignette condition. The effects of higher income and more education are greater for the lesbian and gay vignettes than for the heterosexual vignette.
14. This pattern is even clearer when we include survey weight. (See Table S5C in the online supplement for more details.)
15. Instead of favoring same-sex couples for formal rights, heterosexuals may be penalizing the unmarried heterosexual couple for a perceived lack of commitment. However, past research suggests this effect would be minimal because attitudes toward this arrangement have become more accepting since the mid-1970s (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001). In surveys that do not specify otherwise, respondents may assume that heterosexual couples are married, whereas same-sex couples are unmarried. We remove this assumption by specifying that the couple is unmarried regardless of sexual identity. These findings *minimally* indicate that heterosexuals displayed no differences toward the formal rights of unmarried couples.
16. For example, movement organizing preceding the Stonewall Riots primarily focused on protection from police brutality (Armstrong and Crage 2006).

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