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# Beyond Politics: Opposition to Marriage Equality Predicts Negative Reactions Toward LGBT Individuals

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Beyond Politics: Opposition to Marriage Equality Predicts Negative Reactions Toward

LGBT Individuals

Ryan Hutchings

### Abstract

Past research has examined various factors that predict heterosexual individuals' attitudes toward marriage equality, including gender, age, religion/religiosity, political ideology, and sexual prejudice (Herek, 2011). To our knowledge, no studies have examined the possibility that such attitudes predict consequential behaviors directed at LGBT individuals. Thus, the current work examined the role of opposition to marriage equality in predicting negative behavioral intentions and reactions to antigay hate crimes. Given the importance of gender in sexual prejudice and opposition to marriage equality (Herek, 2000a), these relationships were examined after including gender in the model. Fifty-nine heterosexual students participated in this study. Separate hierarchical regressions revealed that opposition to marriage equality significantly predicted greater negative behavioral intentions ( $\beta = .46, p < .001$ ), reduced recognition of a hate crime ( $\beta = -.30, p < .05$ ), and marginally increased perpetrator justification ( $\beta = -.23, p = .09$ ) above and beyond the influence of gender. Moreover, a two-way interaction indicated that opposition to marriage equality predicted negative behavioral intentions to a greater degree for men than women ( $\beta = -.55, p < .05$ ). These results suggested that marriage equality attitudes are not merely political, but rather, predict influential behavioral intentions and reactions toward LGBT individuals.

*Keywords:* marriage equality attitudes, sexual prejudice, behavioral intentions, hate crimes

## Beyond Politics: Opposition to Marriage Equality Predicts Negative Reactions Toward LGBT Individuals

Opponents of same-sex marriage often preface their arguments against marriage equality with the claim that they are nonprejudiced, which is then followed by the claim that marriage equality simply clashes with their religious beliefs, political party, and/or desire to protect traditional values (Burridge, 2004; Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). However, upon further examination of such arguments, these claims appear to be more than just political attitudes regarding marriage equality, and likely predict consequential behaviors directed at LGBT individuals. Considerable research has been conducted examining factors that predict attitudes toward same-sex marriage (Herek, 2011; Laythe, 1999; Olson, Cadge, & Harrison, 2006), but, to our knowledge, previous research has not examined whether opposition to marriage equality predicts consequential behaviors directed toward LGBT individuals. Thus, the current work sought to fill this gap in the literature by examining the role of opposition to marriage in predicting both negative behavioral intentions directed toward LGBT individuals and reactions to antigay hate crimes.

### **Sexual Prejudice and Same-Sex Marriage**

Previous research has defined sexual prejudice as heterosexual individuals' negative attitudes toward same-sex sexual behavior, individuals with a lesbian, gay, or bisexual orientation, and entire communities of gay, lesbian, and bisexual individuals (Herek, 2000b). Recent studies note that attitudes toward LGBT individuals are moving in a more positive or neutral direction, with multiple studies finding populations with seemingly nonprejudiced attitudes (Herek, 2009; Schellenberg, Hirt, & Sears, 1999;

Simon, 1995). However, anti-gay prejudice still exists (Chonody, Siebert, & Rutledge, 2009; Raiz & Saltzberg, 2007). In an effort to explain the discrepancy between studies showing improvement and those supporting a less optimistic outlook, Morrison and Morrison (2002) suggested that traditional, or “old fashioned,” forms of sexual prejudice, based on moral objection to LGBT individuals, have been replaced with “modern” forms highlighting opposition to rights for LGBT groups, endorsement of traditional values, denial of prejudice and discrimination toward LGBT individuals in contemporary society, and claims that LGBT individuals make unrealistic demands (see also, Cowan, Heiple, Marquez, Khatchadourian, & McNevin, 2005; Krolkowski, Rinella, & Ratcliff, in press; Meertens & Pettigrew, 1997). According to this framework, opposition to marriage equality may be a modern form of sexual prejudice.

Sexual prejudice has been apparent in many of the political arguments made against same-sex marriage, which often rely on religious beliefs, political party views, and/or desire to protect traditional values (Burrige, 2004; Cowan et al., 2005; Hewitt & Stokes, 1975). In addition, those opposing same-sex marriage frequently point to the perceived damage caused to society, families, and children as a result of affording marriage rights to LGBT individuals (Burrige, 2004; Cowan et al., 2005). Such arguments are often prefaced with a denial of overt hostility and/or discrimination directed toward LGBT individuals (van Dijk, 1992). Framing the argument against same-sex marriage in this manner enables the speaker to simultaneously remove oneself from criticism of being prejudiced or discriminatory toward LGBT individuals, and further validates discriminatory positions (Burrige, 2004; Hewitt & Stokes, 1975; Krolkowski et al., in press).

Modern sexual prejudice is just as insidious as old-fashioned sexual prejudice and often leads the perpetrator to believe that he or she is nonprejudiced (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2002; Krolkowski et al., in press). In addition, previous research has suggested that both subtle and explicit forms of sexual prejudice are highly correlated and that both forms negatively influence heterosexual individuals' support of hate crimes and hate speech directed toward LGBT individuals (Cowan et al., 2005). In fact, exposure to subtle sexual prejudice toward LGBT individuals has been shown to lead to increases in the extent to which observers endorse sexual prejudice themselves (Krolkowski et al., in press).

### **The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions**

Research has identified a relationship between attitudes toward stigmatized groups and actual behavior toward those groups (Dovidio, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997, 2002; Kite & Deaux, 1986; McConnell & Leibold, 2001). For instance, Dovidio et al. (1997) found that explicit attitudes toward Black and White individuals predicted White participants' assessments of Black and White interaction partners in terms of their likeability and sincerity. Specifically, White participants scoring higher in subtle racism rated the Black interaction partners more negatively than White interaction partners. Research also revealed that White participants' explicit racial attitudes significantly predicted differences in verbal friendliness toward Black individuals, as well as White participants' evaluations of their own verbal friendliness toward Black interaction partners (Dovidio et al., 2002). Correspondingly, McConnell and Leibold (2001) found that White participants who held negative attitudes toward Black individuals had more negative interactions with Black individuals.

Similarly, Kite and Deaux (1986) investigated the relationship between heterosexual men's attitudes toward LGBT individuals and their subsequent evaluations and behaviors toward interaction partners identified as either gay or not identified in terms of sexual orientation. It was found that those who held negative attitudes toward lesbian and gay individuals rated gay partners more negatively than did those who reported positive attitudes toward lesbian and gay individuals. Men who were uninformed of their partner's sexuality reported the most liking for, and openness to, their partner. Attitudes further impacted the types of questions asked and how men presented themselves to partners. Thus, attitudes toward gay men did have a direct influence on liking for gay men and also influenced the quality of interactions between heterosexual and gay men. Thus, marriage equality attitudes may similarly influence behavioral intentions and real behaviors directed at LGBT individuals.

### **Attitudes and Perceptions of Hate Crimes**

The intention or willingness to engage in behavior that might lead to harmful outcomes for marginalized group members has been described as negative behavioral intentions (Ratcliff, Miller, & Krolikowski, 2013; Ratcliff, Pittinsky, Hoock, Smooha, & Ritvo, 2015). A hate crime is an extreme case of negative behavior that manifests in an overtly violent manner. A great deal of research has been concerned with elucidating the nature of hate crimes (Cowan et al., 2005; Herek, 2000b; Herek et al., 2002; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999). For a crime to be identified as a hate crime, the act must be directed toward a group for possessing a particular trait such as a marginalized sexual identity. LGBT individuals are often the victims of hate crimes because they are perceived to deviate from the sexual norm. This perception leads perpetrators and/or

observers to justify hostile behavior including direct aggression and violence toward LGBT individuals (Herek, 2009).

Hate crimes can take various forms such as “assault, battery, vandalism, arson, murder, lynching, and physical harassment” (Cowan et al., 2005, p. 68). In Herek et al.’s (2002) analysis of interviews with victims of hate crimes, it was concluded that such crimes most often took place in public forums and were perpetrated by multiple individuals. Victims were usually unacquainted with their perpetrators, who tended to be men. The amount of physical and psychological harm caused by hate crimes distinguishes such crimes from other forms of criminal acts because victims of hate crimes are particularly vulnerable to “depression, anger, anxiety, posttraumatic stress, and other more specific emotional and cognitive effects” (Cowan et al., 2005, p. 69; see also Herek et al., 1999).

Research has further examined how individuals react to hate crimes committed by others. Cowan et al.’s (2005) study found that, to the extent individuals reported higher levels of old-fashioned (e.g., blatant sexual prejudice) and modern heterosexism (e.g., subtle sexual prejudice), they expressed greater approval of hate crimes and hate speech. Importantly, old-fashioned and modern heterosexism was found to be significantly related, and both similarly influenced heterosexual individual’s perceptions of hate crimes and hate speech toward LGBT individuals. Thus, both subtle and blatant forms of prejudice impact reactions to extreme discrimination behaviors.

### **Gender, Sexual Prejudice, and Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage**

Past research indicates that gender differences exist in sexual prejudice, such that heterosexual men are more prejudiced toward gay men than are heterosexual



women (Herek, 1988, 2000, 2003). Similarly, heterosexual men show less support for marriage equality than do heterosexual women (Herek, 2000a). Additional research analyzing these gender differences in sexual prejudice suggests that gender-role self-concepts partially account for these differences (Ratcliff et al., 2006). The gender-role self-concept describes the *self* in terms of gender-role stereotypes (Whitley, 1987, 2001). Gender-role self-concepts are often incorporated and accepted as individual values by which people evaluate their own actions and participating in behaviors related to these self-concepts enhances self-esteem (Wood, Christensen, Hebl, & Rothgerber, 1997). Previous research has suggested that endorsing the feminine gender-role self-concept reduces sexual prejudice, and enhances egalitarian personal standards regarding behavior directed toward LGBT individuals (Ratcliff et al., 2006, 2015).

Correspondingly, a great deal of research has focused on the role of masculinity self-ascriptions in both sexual prejudice and aggression toward LGBT individuals (Barron, Struckman-Johnson, Quevillon, & Banka, 2008; Stotzer & Shih, 2012; Whitley, 2001). Specifically, research has shown that endorsement of male gender roles and hypermasculinity are strong predictors of antigay behavior (Whitley, 2001). Moreover, hypermasculinity predicted greater anger and physical antigay aggression in response to male-to-male erotica (Parrot & Zeichner, 2008). Furthermore, Stotzer and Shih (2012) found that men high in sexual prejudice tend to feel emasculated by threats, and men digress against gay men to affirm their masculinity (Theodore & Basow, 2000). Interestingly, Barron et al. (2008) found that men who oppose marriage equality tend to react defensively to same-sex behavior between men. Given the research demonstrating that men are higher in sexual prejudice, less supportive of marriage

equality, and more likely to engage in antigay hate crimes than are women, the influence of gender on the relationship between opposition to marriage equality and subsequent behavioral intentions and reactions to antigay hate crimes, is important to examine.

### **The Current Work**

Previous research has investigated the various ways in which the members of the LGBT community experience sexual prejudice (Herek, 2000b). One form of sexual prejudice is subtle sexual prejudice, which often manifests as endorsement of limited civil rights of LGBT individuals (Krolikowski et al., in press). Specifically, LGBT individuals have historically been deprived of marriage rights and continue to be deprived of such rights in many states. As discussed above, extensive research has examined a variety of factors that predict heterosexual individual's attitudes toward same-sex marriage (Herek, 2011; Laythe, 1999; Olson et al., 2006; Woodford et al., 2012). However, to our knowledge, previous research has not directly examined whether marriage equality attitudes predicts consequential behavioral intentions toward LGBT individuals and reactions to antigay hate crimes. Thus, the primary purpose of the current work was to examine the role of opposition to marriage equality in predicting such behavioral intentions and reactions to hate crimes. Moreover, given the importance of gender in predicting both opposition to marriage equality and sexual prejudice, gender is included as a predictor variable in the primary analyses.

First, replicating previous findings (Herek, 2009), we hypothesized in the present study that opposition to marriage equality would be positively related to blatant sexual prejudice. Second, it was expected that opposition to marriage equality would predict

greater negative behavioral intentions toward LGBT individuals, above and beyond the effect of gender. Third, we hypothesized that opposition to marriage equality would predict reactions to LGBT hate crimes, above and beyond the effect of gender.

Specifically, it was predicted that: (a) opposition to marriage equality would predict decreased recognition of a hate crime above and beyond the effect of gender, (b) opposition to marriage equality would predict increased perpetrator justification above and beyond the effect of gender, and (c) opposition to marriage equality would predict increased victim blaming above and beyond the effect of gender.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants were 59 heterosexual undergraduates from a Northeastern college (40 women, 19 men) who participated in the experiment for partial course credit. Ages ranged from 18 to 47 years, with a mean age of 20 years. Forty-six of the 59 participants identified as Protestant, Catholic, or Christian.

### **Measures**

**Demographics questionnaire.** A 4-item questionnaire was utilized to gather demographic information with questions assessing sex, sexual orientation, age, and religion.

**Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale (ATSM).** The 15-item ATSM (Pearl & Galupo, 2007) was used to assess global attitudes regarding marriage equality (e.g., "Same-sex marriage undermines the meaning of the traditional family"). The items were measured on 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly*

*agree*) with higher scores indicating greater opposition toward marriage equality ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

**Blatant sexual prejudice.** Blatant sexual prejudice was assessed via 11 items developed from the Modern Homonegativity Scale (Morrison & Morrison, 2002). For each item, the participants rated the extent to which they endorsed each statement (e.g., “I believe that gay people deserve to be ridiculed”). The items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) with higher scores indicating greater prejudice ( $\alpha = .75$ ).

**Measure of negative behavioral intentions toward gay men and lesbians.**

The 10-item negative behavioral intentions scale is an expansion of a five-item measure (Ratcliff et al., 2013) examining the extent to which individuals have negative behavioral intentions toward gay men and lesbians (e.g., “If a homosexual person came onto my friend, I think that my friend should hit the person”). The items were measured on a 1 (*strongly agree*) to a 5 (*strongly disagree*) rating scale with higher scores indicating greater negative behavioral intentions ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

**Perception of Anti-Gay Hate Crimes Scale.** Perception of anti-gay hate crimes were assessed with a scale created for the present research (see Appendix A). This scale contains scenarios describing six actual hate crimes of varying severity that were adapted from testimonials recorded in qualitative assessments of antigay hate crimes (Herek, 2002). Following each hate crime, participants completed three items assessing the extent to which the scenario was perceived as a hate crime, how much the perpetrator was justified in their actions (i.e., perpetrator justification), and how much the victim was responsible for what happened to them (i.e., victim blaming).

Examination of reliabilities for recognition of hate crime ( $\alpha = .76$ ), perpetrator justification ( $\alpha = .96$ ), and victim-blaming ( $\alpha = .80$ ) were high across all scenarios, thus ratings for each were collapsed. The hate crime and victim-blaming items were measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) with higher scores indicating greater hate crime recognition and victim blaming, respectively. The perpetrator justification question was measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*unjustifiable*) to 5 (*justifiable*) in which higher scores indicated increased perceived justification of the perpetrator's actions.

### **Procedure**

Before conducting the experiment, institutional review board approval (#2012-155) was obtained. Upon arrival to the experimental session, participants were seated at an individual computer and given 30 min to complete the study. The scales were presented electronically via Medialab software (Jarvis, 2010). Participants completed the demographics questionnaire, the ATSM, the blatant sexual prejudice scale, the measure of negative behavior toward gay men and lesbians, and the perception of antigay hate crimes scale in a random order for each participant.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

Descriptive statistics and correlations between opposition to marriage equality, blatant prejudice, behavioral intentions, recognition of a hate crime, victim blaming, and perpetrator justification are reported in Table 1. In support of the first hypothesis and consistent with prior research, opposition to marriage equality was related to increased blatant sexual prejudice.

### **Hierarchical Regression Analyses**

The role of gender and opposition to marriage equality in predicting negative behavioral intentions and reactions to hate crimes were more directly assessed through separate hierarchical regression analyses that employed negative behavioral intentions, recognition of a hate crime, perpetrator justification, and victim blaming as dependent variables. Three steps were used to build each regression equation: gender of the participant was entered into the first block (-1 = men, 1 = women), and gender and opposition to marriage equality were entered into the second block. The two-way interaction was entered into the third block and was created by multiplying the continuous marriage equality variable with the dichotomous gender variable. Gender was entered into the first block to assess the independent contribution of the gender of the respondent, whereas the second step analyzed the contributions of opposition to marriage equality in the presence of the gender of the respondent. The interaction term allowed for a test of gender differences in relation to opposition to marriage equality (see Table 2 for individual regression coefficients and changes in  $R^2$  associated with each step for each dependent variable respectively).

Gender of respondent significantly predicted negative behavioral intentions when it was entered into the first step,  $t(58) = -4.32, p < .001$ . When opposition to marriage equality was entered on the second step, gender remained significant,  $t(58) = -4.02, p < .001$ , and opposition to marriage equality accounted for additional variance,  $t(58) = 4.54, p < .001$ . When the interaction term was entered in the final step, opposition to marriage equality remained significant,  $t(58) = 4.77, p < .001$ , whereas gender became nonsignificant,  $t < 1$ . The two-way interaction accounted for additional variance,  $t(58) =$

-2.30,  $p = .03$ . Examination of the two-way interaction indicated that opposition to marriage equality had a larger effect on negative behavioral intentions for men than women (see Figure 1). Consistent with the second hypothesis, opposition to marriage equality predicted increased negative behavioral intentions, above and beyond the effect of gender.

Gender significantly predicted recognition of a hate crime when it was entered into the first step,  $t(58) = 3.90$ ,  $p < .001$ . When opposition to marriage equality was entered on the second step, gender remained significant,  $t(58) = -3.50$ ,  $p = .001$ , and opposition to marriage equality accounted for additional variance,  $t(58) = -2.62$ ,  $p = .01$ . When the two-way interaction term was entered in the final step, gender lost significance,  $t < 1$ , but opposition to marriage equality remained significant,  $t(58) = -2.65$ ,  $p = .01$ . The two-way interaction was not significant  $t < 1$ . Supporting hypothesis 3a, opposition to marriage equality predicted decreased recognition of a hate crime, above and beyond the effect of gender.

Our third hypothesis was partially supported. As we expected, (a) opposition to marriage equality predicted decreased recognition of a hate crime, above and beyond the effect of gender. Although gender did not significantly predict perpetrator justification when it was entered into the first step,  $t < 1$ , opposition to marriage equality marginally explained variance in perpetrator justification scores in the second step,  $t(58) = -1.71$ ,  $p = .09$ . Opposition to marriage equality remained marginally significant with the inclusion of the two-way interaction in the third step,  $t(58) = -1.71$ ,  $p = .09$ , and the interaction was not significant  $t < 1$ . In partial support of our hypothesis, (b) opposition to marriage equality marginally predicted increased perpetrator justification, above and beyond the

effect of gender. However, (c) opposition to marriage equality did not significantly predict victim blaming,  $t = 1.38$ ,  $p = .17$ .

### **Discussion**

Although previous literature has revealed connections between opposition to marriage equality, blatant sexual prejudice, behavioral intentions, and perceptions of antigay hate crimes, the current work examined whether opposition to marriage equality predicts greater negative behavioral intentions and negative reactions to antigay hate crimes. In support of the first hypothesis, opposition to marriage equality was related to blatant sexual prejudice, replicating previous findings. Consistent with the second hypothesis, opposition to marriage equality predicted increased negative behavioral intentions, above and beyond the influence of gender. This finding was consistent with previous research showing that blatant prejudicial attitudes influence behavior (Dovidio et al., 1997; Dovidio et al., 2002; Kite & Deaux, 1986; McConnell & Leibold, 2001), and extended these earlier findings to suggest that subtle forms of sexual prejudice, such as opposition to marriage, can also impact behavior. Moreover, the interaction between gender and opposition to marriage equality indicated that opposition to marriage equality predicted negative behavioral intentions to a greater extent for men than it did for women. Consistent with the second hypothesis, opposition to marriage equality predicted decreased recognition of a hate crime, above and beyond the influence of gender. Additionally, opposition to marriage equality predicted increased perpetrator justification but did not predict increased victim blaming. These findings expanded upon Cowan and colleagues' (2005) finding that modern heterosexism is related to approval of hate crimes. Specifically, the current data show that opposition to marriage equality—



a form of modern heterosexism—predicts reduced recognition of hate crimes and marginally greater perpetrator justification. Contrary to predictions, the relationship between opposition to marriage equality and victim blaming was not significant. This finding might be the result of a lack of variance in victim blaming scores (see limitations section below for further elaboration). Overall, the current findings suggested that opposition to marriage equality is not simply an innocuous opinion that can be minimized, but rather, that such attitudes might predict behavior toward LGBT individuals, and potentially affect important juror judgments related to antigay hate crimes.

### **Implications**

As previously noted, subtle sexual prejudice can often go undetected by both the perceiver and the target (Dovidio et al., 2002; Krolkowski et al., in press). For example, Krolkowski et al. (in press) examined the impact of exposure to subtle and blatant sexual prejudice on a perceiver's prejudicial attitudes and social identity. Results indicated that exposure to blatant sexual prejudice reduced personal endorsement of prejudice, whereas exposure to subtle sexual prejudice increased personal endorsement of prejudice. Moreover, participants showed greater psychological distancing from a blatantly prejudiced speaker relative to a subtly prejudiced speaker. Thus, Krolkowski et al. (in press) argued that perceivers may struggle to detect latent prejudicial attitudes in subtly prejudiced statements. Similarly, individuals appear to be largely unaware of their own subtle prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2002; Krolkowski, in press). Arguments that attempt to dissociate opposition to marriage equality from blatant prejudice toward LGBT individuals, may therefore prey on perceivers' and

targets' inability to detect this common form of prejudice. The current work challenged such arguments by showing that, to the extent to which individuals oppose marriage equality, they are more likely to express prejudicial attitudes and negative behavioral intentions toward LGBT individuals.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Although the present study contributed to the limited research examining the role of opposition to marriage equality in predicting reactions to the LGBT community, several conceptual and methodological limitations should be noted. Our small, relatively homogenous sample was a limitation of this study. That is, given the number of measured variables, our sample size was small. Moreover, there was a limited number of sampled men ( $n = 19$ ) given the focus on gender as a predictive variable. A post-hoc power analysis with a focus on gender was conducted for each dependent variable to address the previous concerns. The power analysis indicated that there was sufficient power to detect gender differences in negative behavioral intentions and recognition of a hate crime, but there was insufficient power to identify gender differences in perpetrator justification or victim blaming scores. Thus, the power analysis supported that the relationship between opposition to marriage equality and negative behavioral intentions, as well as recognition of a hate crime, is not spurious but suggested that there was not sufficient power to detect effects in perpetrator justification or victim blaming.

In particular, the lack of power coupled with a lack of variance in the victim blaming variable may explain the absence of a relationship between opposition to marriage equality and victim blaming. Victim blaming scores were highly positively

skewed, and the mean victim blaming score was very low (see Table 1). Thus, it is possible that a floor effect might account for the inability of opposition to marriage equality to predict victim blaming. The opposition to marriage equality variable also had a strong positive skew. A closer examination of the distribution of scores indicates that only 15 of the 68 participants (i.e., 22% of the participants) scored above the midpoint of the scale. This positive skew in the opposition to marriage equality variable may have occurred because this research was conducted in a state with legal same-sex marriage. Additionally, men (i.e., 37%) were more likely than women (i.e., 20%) to report negative attitudes toward same-sex marriage equality. Thus, this research may better examine whether a *lack* of support for marriage equality, rather than support, predicts negative behavioral intentions toward LGBT individuals and harmful reactions to LGBT hate crimes. Future research, with a larger and more diverse sample, should examine the relationship between opposition to marriage equality and victim blaming.

Additionally, the responses of college students might not generalize to more heterogeneous samples. Previous research has suggested that educated and young respondents have more positive attitudes toward LGBT individuals and same-sex marriage than uneducated and older respondents (Lewis, 2003; Negy & Eisenman, 2005; Steffens & Wagner, 2004), although some studies have found that college students only have moderately positive attitudes toward LGBT individuals (Woodford et al., 2012). In addition, the current study included a larger proportion of women, who tend to express more support of marriage equality than do men (Herek, 2009). Consistent with this research, participants in the current study tended to respond in a nonprejudiced manner on all of the measured variables, including the attitudes toward

same sex marriage scale, which indicates some degree of robustness to these results (Rosik, Dinges, & Saavedra, 2013).

Another limitation of this study was that most of the participants in the present study identified as Christian. Olson et al. (2006) suggested that religion plays a major role in attitudes toward same-sex marriage, with Christian participants expressing more negative attitudes than Atheist or Agnostic participants. Additional research has noted that religiosity and the frequency of religious attendance are related to opposition to marriage equality (Fisher, Derison, Polley, Cadman, & Johnston, 1994; Lewis, 2003). Although our results might have been influenced by a lack of religious diversity, relatively nonprejudiced responses on all of the measured variables contradicted this possibility. Nonetheless, future research should examine whether opposition to marriage equality predicts negative reactions to LGBT individuals in a sample with more religious diversity.

As previously mentioned, many demographic factors influence heterosexual individuals' attitudes toward same-sex marriage (Herek, 2011; Laythe, 1999; Olson et al., 2006; Woodford et al., 2012). The present study only examined a subset of these demographic variables, and this is a noteworthy limitation. Although the current study focused on the influence of opposition to marriage equality on predicting negative reactions to LGBT individuals, a more thorough examination of demographic variables would have clarified the results. For example, religiosity and religious affiliation (Olson et al., 2006), political orientation (Herek, 2011), social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism (Cerecedes, 2003), and moral foundations, or overarching beliefs that serve as the basis for morality (see Rosik et al., 2013), predict attitudes toward

same-sex marriage. For example, interesting new research has suggested that moral foundations focusing on loyalty to ingroups predict forms of modern homonegativity (e.g., opposition to marriage equality) to a greater extent than do moral foundations capturing obligations to remain chaste and pure (Rosik et al., 2013). Future research might examine the possibility that the source of morality moderates the relationship between opposition to marriage equality and behavioral intentions. That is, perhaps individuals who oppose marriage equality on the basis of loyalty to ingroups, would be more inclined to engage in antigay behaviors than would those whose moral foundations are based on concerns of appearing pure (cf. Rosik et al., 2013). Although the current research could have benefitted from the inclusion of a greater number of individual difference variables, the finding that opposition to marriage was predictive of behavioral intentions and reactions to antigay hate crimes above and beyond the effects of gender, alleviated some concern. That is, given that gender is strongly related to religiosity and political orientation (Barron et al., 2008), and given that opposition to marriage remained a significant predictor in a model with gender included, it is likely that opposition to marriage would remain significant in models with variables highly related to gender. Nevertheless, future research should examine how these additional demographic variables clarify the relationship between opposition to marriage equality and negative reactions to LGBT individuals, with a specific emphasis placed on the possible mediational role of moral foundations in predicting behavioral intentions.

A potential conceptual limitation of the current study was that it did not examine the influence of opposition to marriage equality on implicit attitudes, but rather, focused on explicit attitudes. Previous research has suggested that individuals are motivated to

present themselves in a certain light, and to this end, monitor the expression of explicit prejudicial attitudes (Dovidio et al., 1997; Dovidio et al., 2002; McConnell & Leibold, 2001; Plant & Devine, 1989). To circumvent such response biases, many implicit prejudice tasks examine unconscious prejudice that participants have little control over (Fazio et al., 1995; Greenwald, McGhee, Schwartz, 1998). Importantly, Jellison, McConnell, & Gabriel (2004) found that explicit and implicit sexual prejudice are related, perhaps because social desirability in terms of nonprejudiced responding seems to be less of a concern for expressions of sexual prejudice relative to racial prejudice (Ratcliff et al., 2006). Nevertheless, literature has suggested that explicit and implicit prejudice have a differential impact on behavior. For example, explicit sexual prejudice influences deliberate planned behaviors directed toward gay men, whereas implicit sexual prejudice influences the willingness to immerse in gay culture (Jellison et al., 2004). Future research should examine the relationship between opposition to marriage equality, implicit sexual prejudice, and various spontaneous behaviors directed toward LGBT individuals.

Another limitation of this study is that negative behavioral intentions toward LGBT individuals may not always predict real and consequential negative behaviors. Although behavioral intentions appear to predict deliberate behavior, much research notes situations in which participants do not act in accordance with their attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Fazio, 1986; for a review, see Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Specifically, attitudes primarily guide behavior when individuals have the opportunity and motivation to reflect on their attitudes (Fazio & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Our experimental conditions afforded participants the opportunity to reflect on their attitudes.

Moreover, participants responded in a relatively nonprejudiced manner, indicating some motivation to provide socially desirable responses. However, in every day interactions, individuals do not always have the motivation or opportunity to thoughtfully reflect, hence further research might examine the relationships between actual behavior and opposition to marriage equality. For example, Buck, Plant, Ratcliff, Zielaskowski, & Boerner (2013) measured actual physical distancing behavior from a gay man by enabling participants to rearrange a set of chairs before an interaction with him. Similarly, future research might examine the relationship between opposition to marriage equality and behaviors directed toward LGBT individuals, such as physical distancing.

### **Conclusion**

Although political arguments dissociate opposition to marriage equality from sexual prejudice, the current study suggests that such attitudes are pernicious predictors of both the intention to engage in harmful antigay behaviors, and less opposed reactions to hate crimes. Given these relationships, it is suggested here that opposition to marriage equality should be a major target for LGBT initiatives. Indeed, obtaining equal rights globally may have a substantial impact on reducing sexual prejudice and discrimination. Importantly, legal supports for equal rights sends a clear message to proponents of same-sex marriage bans that such views are prejudicial and unacceptable.

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**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among Marriage Equality Attitudes, Blatant Prejudice, Negative Behavioral Intentions, Recognition of a Hate Crime, Victim Blaming, and Perpetrator Justification*

Measure	Marriage	Blatant	Neg. Pro.	Recog. Hate	Victim	Perpetrator
Marriage		.58**	.54**	-.38**	.15	-.23
Blatant			.84**	-.53**	.15	-.25
Neg. Pro.				-.55**	.03	-.21
Recog. Hate					.13	.35**
Victim						.49**
Perpetrator						
<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	2.01(.87)	1.69(.68)	1.67(.66)	4.43(.63)	1.3(.73)	4.70(.79)
Range	1.00–4.67	1.00–4.22	1.00–3.90	2.17–5.00	1.00–4.75	1.17–5.00

*Note.* Marriage = opposition to same-sex marriage score; Blatant = measure of blatant prejudice; Neg. Pro. = measure of negative behavioral intentions; Recog. Hate = recognition of a hate crime score; Victim = victim blaming score; Perpetrator = perpetrator un-justification score.

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 2**

*Separate Hierarchical Regression for Predicting Negative Behavioral Intentions, Recognition of a Hate Crime, and Perpetrator Justification*

Variable	$\beta$	$F$	Change $R^2$
Neg. Beh. Intention ( $N = 59$ )			
Step 1		18.64	.25***
Gender <sup>a</sup>	-.50***		
Step 2		22.81	.20***
Gender	-.41**		
Opp. Marriage	.46***		
Step 3		18.12	.05*
Gender	.10		
Opp. Marriage	.47***		
Gender x Marriage	-.55*		
Recog. Hate Crime ( $N = 59$ )			
Step 1		15.20	.21***
Gender	.46***		
Step 2		11.80	.09*
Gender	.40***		
Opp. Marriage	-.30*		
Step 3		8.26	.01
Gender	.13		
Opp. Marriage	-.30*		
Gender x Marriage	.30		
Perpetrator Justified ( $N = 59$ )			
Step 1		.15	.003
Gender	.05		
Step 2		1.54	.05
Gender	.006		
Opp. Marriage	-.23		
Step 3		1.09	.004
Gender	-.14		
Opp. Marriage	-.23		
Gender x Marriage	.16		

*Note.* Opp. Marriage = Opposition to same-sex marriage score; Neg. Beh. Intentions = the negative behavioral intentions scale; Recog. Hate Crime = the recognition of a hate crime scale; Perpetrator Justified = the perpetrator justification scale

a. -1 = men; 1 = women.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$