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Social Inclusion and the Value of Marriage Equality in Massachusetts and the Netherlands

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Much of the debate about marriage rights for same-sex couples has focused on material and legal benefits. However, some of the primary benefits of marriage equality for same-sex couples and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people might be psychological. The two studies presented draw on qualitative data from 19 same-sex couples in the Netherlands and 556 people married to same-sex partners in Massachusetts (United States). The right to marry and exercising the right to marry were associated with greater feelings of social inclusion among people in same-sex couples. The Massachusetts data find that White, male, high-income respondents reported greater feelings of inclusion than other groups. Individuals with more accepting families and people with more wedding guests reported more feelings of social inclusion. On a policy level, the social inclusion effect suggests marriage may have significant psychological benefits for same-sex couples.

The right to marry is perhaps the high mark of formal equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. As of January 2011, an individual may legally marry a same-sex partner in only 10 countries and five states in the United States. In the United States, approximately 32,000 same-sex couples have married in those five states and, briefly, in California (Gates, 2009). Recent referenda in Maine (Question 1) and California (Proposition 8) overturned the legislatively (Maine) and judicially (California) granted right to marry for same-sex couples. These actions revealed the continuing political, social, and cultural barriers that stand in the way of full legal equality for LGBT individuals. This article is focused on the outcome of debates and referenda on marriage rights for same-sex couples. What happens when same-sex couples gain the right to marry?

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This study focused on the gains to same-sex couples through their social inclusion in an important social institution, the right to civil marriage.

The large number of economic and legal rights and benefits that come with marriage are well known and more-or-less automatic. Depending on a couple's situation and residence, these rights might include property rights, parental rights, health insurance, social security benefits, tax benefits, and survivor benefits, among others (e.g., Badgett, 2001). Given the absence of such benefits when denied the right to marry, same-sex couples who can and do marry are likely to see financial and economic gains. For example, people in same-sex couples are more likely to be uninsured than are people in different-sex married couples (Ash & Badgett, 2006; Heck, Sell, & Gorin, 2006), an outcome that stems at least in part from being unable to marry and be recognized by employers who provide health insurance to employees and their legal spouses. Indeed, same-sex couples in Massachusetts have reported that they are more likely to receive health insurance benefits as a result of marriage (Ramos, Goldberg, & Badgett, 2009), suggesting that the economic gains from inclusion in marriage might be important for couples.

Instead of focusing on material rights and obligations that would directly affect same-sex couples if and when they can marry, the two studies presented here focus on a different outcome, namely feelings of social inclusion that are related to having the right to marry. On a conceptual level, this article expands on existing concepts of social exclusion in the public policy literature, primarily by drawing links between the effects of social exclusion experienced by same-sex couples before they have the right to marry and the psychological gains from social inclusion that same-sex couples experience when they have the right to marry.

To observe opportunities for social inclusion, two separate studies analyzed data from the first country to grant that right, the Netherlands, and from the first state in the United States to grant that right, Massachusetts. The two studies were complementary, with the qualitative data from the Netherlands providing an in-depth understanding of the effects of marriage equality and the survey data from Massachusetts capturing a broader range of experiences. The two sources of data analyzed in this article provided clear evidence that the right to marry increased feelings of social inclusion, even when same-sex couples did not choose to marry.

Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

Social scientists and policy analysts in the European Union and European countries have developed the concept of social exclusion as an analytical and policy tool (e.g., Percy-Smith, 2000). "Exclusion" is used in several ways, sometimes referring to situations of legal and economic inequality, to starkly polarized societies, or, as in the American context, the overlapping set of disadvantages that are said to characterize an "underclass." The key underlying premise is that social, legal, and economic constraints keep those who are excluded from full participation

in society. Those constraints link disadvantages in some social settings with those in other settings, such as the causal links between racial and economic housing segregation, poorer quality of education, and a reduced likelihood of employment. Social scientists identify psychological as well as economic processes that are involved in producing and reproducing social exclusion (Percy-Smith, 2000, p. 10).

On average, LGBT people share many social, economic, and legal indicia of exclusion, such as higher rates of poverty, unequal wages, and employment discrimination (Albelda, Badgett, Gates, & Schneebaum, 2009; Badgett, 2001; Badgett et al., 2009). The legal constraint that shuts LGBT people with same-sex partners out of marriage has psychological, social, and economic implications (e.g., Badgett, 2001; Lannutti, 2011; Maisel & Fingerhut, 2011). This perspective is consistent with a growing body of psychological research suggesting that "minority stress" and experiences of discrimination or exclusion generate negative effects on physical and mental health of LGBT people or other groups experiencing social exclusion (Cochran, 2001; Mays & Cochran, 2001; Mays, Cochran, & Barnes, 2007; Meyer, 1995, 2003; Riggle, Thomas, & Rostosky, 2005; Russell, 2000).

The two studies reported herein focused on what happened when an excluded group experienced a change in one of the constraints that creates conditions of social exclusion, as when same-sex couples in the Netherlands and Massachusetts gained the right to marry. The primary hypothesis, based on the conceptual frameworks of social exclusion and minority stress, was that feelings of social inclusion would be bolstered by legal equality, specifically the right to civil marriage for same-sex couples (Hypothesis 1).

A second set of more nuanced hypotheses for empirical analysis captured the possibility that the degree of social inclusion generated by the right to marry might vary systematically across locations or across individuals. Though the data from Massachusetts and the Netherlands did not allow an analysis of the role of variation in geographic factors on social inclusion, the Massachusetts data in study 2 did allow for analyses to identify other correlates of social inclusion.

Feelings of social inclusion might vary across individuals within a particular context for many reasons. One hypothesis is that the visibility and salience of an LGBT person's unequal legal status will influence the degree of social inclusion experienced by the individual when they gain the right to marry. Equality might be more noticeable and experienced more directly as a feeling of social inclusion when individuals have faced obvious, and perhaps painful, experiences that highlighted their inequality. I call this the "salience hypothesis" (Hypothesis 2).

One possible salience-enhancing factor might be religiosity (Hypothesis 2a). More religious individuals might have previously felt more social exclusion than nonreligious people because they are more exposed to situations in which their unequal status is made visible and salient (e.g., weddings are a common ritual

performed in faith communities; Oswald, 2000; see also Rothblum, Balsam, & Solomon, 2011). Similarly, individuals who were unable to receive employer-provided health insurance for a same-sex partner would have had an experience of discrimination with both psychological and highly visible financial consequences (Hypothesis 2b). Individuals who had been previously married to a different-sex spouse might have a heightened awareness of the legal distinctions between marriage and nonmarriage or memories of the social inclusion felt while being married (Hypothesis 2c). For each of those three subgroups of LGBT individuals, marrying a same-sex partner might come with a heightened sense of social inclusion to replace or begin to outweigh the psychological harm from past experiences of exclusion. Thus measures in the Massachusetts data that capture the experience of those situations would be expected to have a positive effect on feelings of inclusion as a result of having and exercising the right to marry.

Another reason for variation among LGBT people with respect to feelings of social inclusion when given the right to marry concerns intersecting identities, such as race, sex, class, and sexual orientation. To the extent that different complex positions put individuals in particular positions of more or less social privilege, individuals might have different experiences of inclusion (see van Zyl, 2011). The "privilege hypothesis" (Hypothesis 3) is that marriage equality might generate greater feelings of inclusiveness for individuals in relatively privileged groups, namely men, White people, and higher-income people. Some have argued that the right to marry would have more value to LGBT people in those groups because it completes the set of characteristics of socioeconomic privilege (e.g., Ettelbrick, 1989). From this perspective, a gay, White, upper-income man might perceive the inability to marry as the one (or one of only a few) remaining important differences between himself and the group that has the most privilege: heterosexual, White, upper-income men. Of course, the right to marry in Massachusetts or other states does not constitute full marriage equality in the United States, because few other states would recognize the marriage and the federal government cannot, by law, recognize a same-sex marriage. In relative terms, however, the right to marry moves those gay men much closer to full privileged status than marriage would for people of color, women, or lower-income people, so marriage-induced feelings of inclusion might be greater for high-income White gay men.

The "accepting context" hypothesis (Hypothesis 4) predicts the variation in the responses of an individual's family, friends, or community, to the marriage of a same-sex couple. Direct expressions of acceptance by important people in an individual's social network might increase LGBT people's feelings of social inclusion, specifically greater social inclusion with the family or community (Hypothesis 4a). Certain characteristics of weddings might also measure or even create social acceptance, such as the size of a respondent's wedding (Hypothesis 4b). Larger weddings might expose more friends and family to the ritual performed by the same-sex couple, and exposure could lead to changed views

of the relationship. Larger weddings are also a visible measure of greater support, because it seems reasonable to assume that individuals who are not supportive of a same-sex couple marrying would not be likely to attend. Large weddings might require more economic resources from couples and guests, but because wedding expenditures can vary from very expensive to minimal, a large wedding as defined below in study 2 was potentially affordable within even a small budget.

Study 1: The Netherlands

Method

Participants. The data from the Netherlands came from a project that collected qualitative data from interviews with same-sex couples in the Netherlands in the first half of 2004, 3 years after Dutch couples gained the right to marry (see Badgett, 2009, for more details). I recruited a sample of same-sex couples living in the Netherlands through social and professional networks. The resulting sample included 19 couples (6 male couples and 13 female couples), with interviews of 34 individuals of varying age, national background, and ethnicity. Overall, the sample was made up mostly of urban, well-educated, and politically left individuals between the ages of 35 and 50. Eight couples were binational couples, including six people from the United States, adding to the applicability of these data to the U.S. context. Most interviews involved both members of the couple, but four involved only one member for scheduling reasons. The interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes and focused on the couples' decision to marry, to become registered partners, or to remain legally single.

Measures. The interview protocol provided measures of the impact of social inclusion or social exclusion on respondents. First, I asked questions about the personal effects of marriage on those couples who married or registered, which generated some mentions of the impact of social inclusion on individuals in the couples. Second, the protocol included a question about respondents' goals and intentions related to marriage when they were children, which encouraged several respondents to look back and comment on the impact of the inability to marry a same-sex partner on their intentions and on their views about marriage as an institution. Those answers provided a measure of the impact of social exclusion and later inclusion on changes in attitudes about marriage over time. Third, toward the end of the interview all respondents, regardless of marital status, were asked their opinions about the impact of the right to marry on Dutch society more broadly, providing a less personal perspective on the change in social inclusion.

These interview questions allowed individuals to express feelings or relate experiences providing data on both perceptions of social inclusion and social exclusion. The data were coded for feelings of social inclusion for same-sex

couples who married. Codes included: (1) reactions of friends, family members, and others; (2) experiences of having a partner more accepted by one's family after marrying; and (3) experiences of situations in which the legal relationship of the couple is not recognized. Three other codes captured data related to feelings of inclusion or exclusion both for couples who had married and for couples who had not married: (1) childhood or earlier adult expectations about marriage; (2) beliefs about the extent of larger social changes in attitudes about LGB people and gay marriage; and (3) feelings of social inclusion within the larger society as a result of having the right to marry.

Analysis. Data analysis drew on the grounded theory approach (Strauss, 1987). Two assistants and I conducted a detailed, word-by-word analysis of half of the transcribed interviews to discover concepts that fit the data. We developed a set of codes (categories) that explained respondents' ideas and decisions about marriage. In a second stage, I coded each interview in HyperResearch with the basic set of codes developed in the first stage of analysis. The third stage of analysis involved expanding the set of theoretical relationships and using the data to assess hypotheses about connections within the data between measures related to social inclusion or exclusion and other relevant outcomes for the couples interviewed. More information on the data, analysis, and findings of this study is available in Badgett (2009).

Results

The results presented below show a connection between the right to marry and social inclusion. The qualitative data from the Netherlands provided evidence consistent with Hypothesis 1, namely that exclusion from marriage is harmful and that the right to marry provides wide-ranging benefits in terms of social inclusion. In addition to supporting Hypothesis 1, the qualitative data provided more nuanced understandings of the processes by which social inclusion or exclusion is connected to the right to marry.

Pre-Equality Exclusion—"Not Invited to the Party"

Respondents expressed feelings of exclusion from marriage in several contexts. Although many respondents shared a common expectation that they would marry when they were children, others did not share in that expectation, often because they had observed unhappy marriages of parents. As adolescents or adults, lesbians' and gay men's alienation from the institution intensified and became associated with being gay and, therefore, explicitly excluded from an important social institution.

These feelings of exclusion were clear in many respondents' accounts. One lesbian in a registered partnership noted, "I never thought of myself getting married. I mean, marriage was for straight people. Yeah, so, yeah, I'm not straight so I can't get married." A married lesbian stated, "I was already kind of really pissed off about marriage because it excluded me. And I stayed that way for a long time. . ." An unmarried gay man also expressed this sense of exclusion:

> Before I knew I was gay, I was already sure I was never going to marry, and that is something I told my parents and with my friends. And so at that time already I disliked the [institution]. And then I turned out to be gay and then it was even more logical not to marry.

Indeed, other respondents also connected their opposition to marriage with their exclusion from marriage. As a married lesbian put it, "it was definitely, you know, if I wasn't invited to the party then I really didn't need to be at the party. It really wasn't the party to be at! So I felt really excluded and therefore that it wasn't . . . something interesting."

Direct and Indirect Expressions of Social Inclusion for Married Couples

One direct expression of support for same-sex couples who married came during the wedding ceremonies at town hall and post-ceremony celebrations (usually on the same day as the wedding), providing support for the accepting context hypothesis (Hypothesis 4). Many married same-sex couples had large weddings and/or celebrations that included friends and family members as part of the formal wedding ceremony. In most cases, family member and friends also participated in the planning and carrying out of the celebration by giving speeches, toasts, or other entertainment that expressed inclusion in a culturally familiar ritual and happiness about the occasion. That participation was partly orchestrated by the couple but was also, in many cases, volunteered by the family members and friends. Respondents pointed to others' participation and enjoyment of the ceremony and party as a satisfying and supportive aspect of the ritual, implying an element of the day that might contribute to feelings of inclusion:

> The day after the marriage, my brother came here to give [us]. . . the rest of wedding cake and we were a little bit depressed here at home, just feeling what happened. And my brother came and he was very enthusiastic about the day before, and it was nice to hear somebody else say, "Oh it was perfect!" It was nice and it was good for us to hear. (Married lesbian respondent)

I also asked couples who had married or registered as partners about the reactions of friends, family members, and other people, as positive reactions might provide either a direct measure of inclusion or a basic requirement that must be in place before couples would feel included. In many cases, couples pointed to specific people in their lives who had reacted negatively (although in many of those situations the upset individual changed his or her mind fairly quickly), who had

reacted positively, or who had no obvious reaction. In other cases, respondents recounted a general positive reaction they observed when telling people about their marriage with specific examples:

> "... [I]f you say to certain people 'my husband,' then, 'Oh you are married?' They really think it's something beautiful that you've done together." (Married gay man)

Another way that same-sex couples experienced social inclusion when marrying was the greater acceptance and sense of familial inclusion of the new spouse. Not all couples reported a greater acceptance, because they interpreted the nonlegally recognized relationship as having been accepted, but many couples did feel enhanced acceptance after marrying. A lesbian in a registered partnership reported her parents' support both for her registered partnership and impending conversion of that status to marriage:

> [My parents] see that it's really serious and we're really signed up for it... We really are committed, and we really made a decision of staying together through better and worse times. You know, [I] mean it sounds old fashioned, but I do think that they like that idea.

Respondents saw family members in general as supporting the legal change in relationship status. Another lesbian in a registered partnership reported, "in both our families, our relationship is taken very seriously and even more after we got married, I think." A married lesbian with conservative relatives found the same reaction:

> The family of my mother is Belgian. And Belgium is more traditional, more conservative. And it's easier for them to accept when you are married because they understand that part of it. I also think because my clients where I work, those men, it's an important issue.

Broader Social Inclusion—"We Feel More Normal"

Toward the end of each interview, I asked respondents whether the right to marry has had an impact on Dutch society more broadly. About half of the couples reported that they saw the right to marry as reflecting and creating a more equal position for lesbians and gay men in the Netherlands. The most common words used to express these feelings were "normal" and "accepted." One married lesbian spoke directly to normality: "So it was really a way to let people appreciate us and treat us like we... don't have horns growing out of our heads..." In her words, gay couples can be part of what she called a "totally normal tradition." Another married lesbian commented on her registered partnership: "It's easy and it's normal. Yeah, of course the way we are, the friends we have, of course, they all think it's normal. But, yeah, I think here in Holland, it's accepted. Normal."

Perhaps more surprisingly, even couples who had not married and did not intend to marry also saw the larger social value of having the right to marry. As one unmarried lesbian feminist who had expressed philosophical objections to the

institution of marriage put it, "I think it makes us feel more normal and more accepted. More [a] part of society for good and for worse, of course, but still more part of society." Her ambivalence about the institution of marriage is evident from the "for good and for worse," but her overall assessment is that the net effect of the right to marry was that social inclusion had increased.

Another element of social inclusion for respondents was the explicit legal right. Several respondents noted that marriage equality fully established the principle of equal treatment and nondiscrimination against lesbians and gay men. According to several respondents, many Dutch heterosexuals see being the first country to grant marriage equality as a source of national pride, suggesting an enthusiastic national response that might enhance feelings of support for lesbians and gay men. As one married lesbian noted,

> I think they really like it that they come from a progressive country. It gives them something to feel like, yeah, those people from the states are so conservative and nuts. They're just wacky. Like why do they make such a big deal of it?

However, some respondents noted that their heterosexual friends might be overestimating the degree of social inclusion that is actually experienced by lesbians and gay men. For instance, one (unmarried) gay man reported:

> I do notice sometimes that Dutch people—straight Dutch people—. . . take the stand towards gays as, now that you can get married, the job is done. And there's even like colleagues or neighbors at the square who look at us [with a] straight face and say, "Well, but you are not a minority anymore," which is interesting. I think, "Well, minority, well we will always be a minority, I am afraid!" They see it as a case of, "Now it is completely accepted so why bother with any specific gay and lesbian events or papers or anything specifically gay and lesbian?"

This respondent in effect raises a concern that social inclusion might mean the loss of a distinctive gay identity as a result of marriage equality and the perception of full equality. Although several other respondents raised similar issues, each was able to identify a counterbalancing concern about the continued existence of Dutch homophobia or about incomplete legal equality, because other countries might not recognize their marriage, and even within the Netherlands some wedding officiants refused to marry same-sex couples.

Discussion

The qualitative data from the Netherlands provided support for Hypothesis 1. Gaining the right to marry created feelings of social inclusion for same-sex couples, whether married or not. These feelings of inclusion stand in sharp contrast to the feelings of social exclusion experienced by respondents before they could legally marry, including as far back as childhood for some respondents. Those feelings of exclusion sometimes led to the belief that marriage was an undesirable institution, thus widening the ideological gap between LGB people and the larger culture.

Couples who married reported positive reactions from friends and family, as well as greater acceptance of the partner/spouse in many cases, which provides support for the accepting context hypothesis. However, the small sample size and nature of the data did not allow for detailed comparisons within the sample, so it was not possible to assess the salience and privilege hypotheses with the Dutch data.

Study 2: Massachusetts

Method

Participants. The Massachusetts data came from the 2009 Health and Marriage Equality in Massachusetts (HMEM) survey, which was administered by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and recruited individuals on the mailing list of a statewide LGBT advocacy group. The organization e-mailed a link to the online survey, along with an e-mail explaining who was conducting the survey, to 38,210 individuals with separate Massachusetts mailing addresses (to minimize the chance that both members of a married couple would be surveyed).

The completed responses from 1,608 individuals implied a response rate of 4.2%. Although that rate is lower than in many surveys, the organization reported to us that they typically have an even lower rate of opening of that organization's e-mail messages. The rate might be low because of e-mail fatigue or changed e-mail addresses, or because many individuals in the organizational database were heterosexual and perceived (accurately) that this survey was not directed at them. After removing heterosexual people and unmarried LGBT individuals, the sample includes 556 people married to a same-sex partner who answered all questions used in this analysis.

The HMEM respondents who were married to a same-sex partner were similar in terms of age and sex to what we know about the full population of individuals in married same-sex couples as reported by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, suggesting that the sample was at least somewhat representative of all married same-sex couples in the state in terms of age and sex. In the HMEM, 62% of respondents were women, whereas 64% of married same-sex couples were female. The median age in the HMEM was 46, and the median age category for all married same-sex couples in Massachusetts was 40–49. Although we do not have comparison statistics at the population level, the HMEM respondents were primarily gay or lesbian (94%), primarily White (93%), and mostly college graduates (85%).

Measures of social inclusion. The Massachusetts data provided four direct and indirect measures of social inclusion related to getting married. Because the survey respondents were all married, it was not possible to separate the impact of gaining the right to marry from the actual act of marrying, although each of the four measures was derived from questions about getting married.

First, the survey asked, "How has marriage changed you or your relationship?" Respondents were asked to choose the three most important changes from 14 responses (and an open-ended "other"). Responses included increased commitment, more acceptance of spouse from family, receiving employer-provided health benefits, happier children, greater financial stability, less worry about legal problems, other people's changed expectations, deciding to buy a house together, deciding to have a child together, being less likely to break up, feeling more accepted by society, and taking better care of each other. The first measure of inclusion ("TOP3") was dichotomous, with the value of 1 assigned when an individual included "We feel more accepted by society" as one of the top three changes as a result of marrying, and a value of 0 if this response was not one of the three indicated. This measure was a measure of feelings of social inclusion related to being married.

The second measure ("ACCEPTED") was dichotomous and coded as 1 when respondents reported on a Likert-type scale that they agree with the statement, "I feel more social acceptance in my community because I am married," and was coded as 0 otherwise. The advantage of using this second measure was that fewer than half of respondents who agreed with the statement also ranked acceptance in the top three effects of marriage. This measure picked up feelings of social inclusion when those feelings were not considered one of the most important changes resulting from marriage.

The third and fourth measures (also dichotomous variables) captured the respondent's perception of social inclusion and support for their marriage. The third measure ("FAMTHINK") was the answer to the question, "What do your family members think of your marriage?" This variable was coded 1 when respondents reported, "They all support it." The fourth measure ("PARTACCEPT") was coded as 1 when respondents either agreed or agreed somewhat with the statement, "My family is more accepting of my partner as a family member since we got married."

Salience measures. To measure the potential salience of marriage, I used evidence on three conditions, coding dummy variables as 1 when the condition was met and 0 if the condition was not present: (1) respondents reported whether they had approached a faith community to have the wedding performed in or by someone associated with that community, with the coding here being 1 if the respondent did not seek a religious wedding; (2) respondents reported whether they received health insurance as a result of being married (31% of the sample); and (3) respondents reported whether they have been previously married (16% of the sample).

Privilege measures. I created separate dummy variables for race (where being White is coded as 1, reflecting 93% of the sample, and other races as 0), sex

(male is coded as 1, capturing 38% of the sample), and having a high income (defined with a dummy variable coded as 1 for household incomes of $90,000 and up, capturing 62% of the sample). I also created an interaction term coded as 1 for high-income, White gay men (26% of the sample).

Size of wedding. The survey asked about the number of guests who attended the wedding, with nine possible categories indicating $0-5, 6-20, 21-40, 41-60, 61-80, 81-100, 101-150, 151-200$, and more than 200 guests. A dummy variable was used for having had 21 or more guests (coded 1). Overall, 65% of individuals reported having 21 or more guests.

Data analysis. The analysis first presents simple cross-tabulations of the social inclusion measures to assess whether marriage equality was associated with social inclusion. Feelings of inclusion might also vary across individuals in ways that provide some insight into the sources of feelings of exclusion. Therefore, I used multivariate analyses of the HMEM data with four separate dependent variables that capture the internal and external measures of social inclusion. I then used multivariate methods to analyze the individual-level data for evidence of the salience hypotheses, including measures for being religious (Hypothesis 2a), receiving benefits (Hypothesis 2b), or having been married (Hypothesis 2c) to see if those characteristics were associated with heightened feelings of social inclusion. The survey data also allow for a quantitative analysis of the privilege hypothesis (Hypothesis 3) and the accepting context Hypotheses (4a and 4b).

The method used to account for the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables is probit analysis (Stata), which allowed estimation of the independent effect of each variable on the probability of reporting feelings of social inclusion. In Table 1, each column is a separate probit regression, with the first model in each set including race, sex, and income variables separately and the second model adding a race–sex–income interaction term. The table reports the marginal effects for each independent variable, capturing the impact of changing the variable's value from 0 to 1 on the probability of observing a positive response to the measure of social inclusion.

Results

Hypothesis 1

Simple cross-tabulations provided evidence that respondents felt more socially included as a result of having married. The most common responses in the TOP3 measure were "increased commitment" (51%), "worry less about legal problems" (46%), and feeling "more accepted by society" (37%). For the ACCEPTED measure, 65% either agreed or agreed somewhat with the statement, "I feel more

Table 1. Probit Model of Social Inclusion (Standard Error in Parentheses)

Variables	TOP3: Feel more accepted socially			ACCEPT: Feel more socially accepted			FAMTHINK: Family positive		PARTACCEPT: Family accepting of partner	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Did not seek religious wedding	0.00446 (0.0438)	−0.00132 (0.0436)	−0.0104 (0.0439)	−0.0176 (0.0435)	−0.0239 (0.0434)	−0.0279 (0.0436)	0.0939** (0.0451)	0.0956** (0.0449)	−0.0303 (0.0456)	−0.0358 (0.0453)
Received health benefits	−0.115*** (0.0436)	−0.118*** (0.0432)	−0.123*** (0.0432)	0.0107 (0.0452)	0.0118 (0.0450)	0.0108 (0.0450)	0.101** (0.0463)	0.0979** (0.0460)	0.0939** (0.0461)	0.101** (0.0456)
Previously married	0.0260 (0.0575)	0.0291 (0.0574)	0.0349 (0.0578)	−0.0104 (0.0564)	−0.00781 (0.0566)	−0.00621 (0.0567)	−0.0281 (0.0594)	−0.0291 (0.0593)	0.0727 (0.0582)	0.0758 (0.0579)
Male	0.0411 (0.0432)			0.0563 (0.0429)			0.0128 (0.0444)		0.00121 (0.0448)	
White	0.183*** (0.0663)			0.121* (0.0710)			0.0123 (0.0824)		0.0784 (0.0846)	
Income over $90,000	0.0425 (0.0431)			0.0206 (0.0431)			0.0194 (0.0451)		−0.0531 (0.0452)	
White, high-income man		0.0858* (0.0484)	0.0888* (0.0485)		0.129*** (0.0483)	0.129*** (0.0484)		−0.00697 (0.0490)		−0.00303 (0.0495)
More than 20 guests	0.109** (0.0440)	0.108** (0.0442)	0.0902** (0.0451)	0.141*** (0.0432)	0.143*** (0.0432)	0.136*** (0.0439)	0.0971** (0.0471)	0.0962** (0.0471)	0.288*** (0.0456)	0.286*** (0.0456)
Family positive			0.175*** (0.0550)			0.0663 (0.0606)				

$N = 556$; * $p<.1$, ** $p<.05$, *** $p<.01$.

social acceptance in my community." Thus both of the internal measures provided support for the general hypothesis that, for these individuals in Massachusetts, having and exercising the right to marry was associated with feelings of greater social inclusion.

Similarly, the external measures of inclusion found a majority reporting these effects. Half (51%) of respondents said that all of their family members support their marriage. More than half (57%) agreed or agreed somewhat that their families are more accepting of the respondent's partner as a family member.

Salience Hypotheses (Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c)

The salience of the marriage issue vis-à-vis other contextual variables in one's life might affect the way an individual responded to the ability to marry and the act of marrying. The salience hypothesis (Hypothesis 2a) predicted that noninvolvement with religious communities might reduce the salience of marriage and therefore reduce the likelihood of reporting a heightened sense of social inclusion. The other salience variables, receiving health insurance as a result of being married (Hypothesis 2b) and having been previously married (Hypothesis 2c), were predicted to have a positive association with social inclusion.

In contrast to those predictions, Table 1 shows that none of the measures that might capture the salience of marriage and prior feelings of exclusion had the expected effect on internal feelings of social inclusion. The religious and previous marriage variables were not statistically significant predictors of the internal measure. When a member of the couple received health care benefits as a result of being married, the respondent was 11–12% less likely to report social inclusion as one of the top three benefits of marriage (columns 1–3). However, receiving health care benefits was a positive predictor for family acceptance, an external measure of inclusion, as shown by the positive marginal effects for that variable in columns 7–10. The salience measure capturing the impact of not seeking a religious service had an unexpected and fairly large positive impact on the probability of a positive reaction by the respondent's family.

Privilege Hypothesis (Hypothesis 3)

The privilege hypothesis predicted that privilege based on race, sex, and/or income would increase the feelings of social inclusion. To test this hypothesis, I included separate dummy variables in the model to control for race, sex, and having a high income. In a separate model, I included an interaction term for high-income White gay men.

White, high-income gay men were 9–13% more likely to report feelings of social inclusion related to marriage. The first column shows that the main driver of the privilege effect is race, with the variable for being White having the only large

and statistically significant effect in the model. Sex, race, and income variables, either entered alone or in an interaction term, did not have a statistically significant effect on respondents' perceptions of family acceptance, shown in columns 7–10.

As a more direct test to rule out a possible confounding effect of the external family acceptance measures on the internal measures, I added the measures of family acceptance as independent variables in the models of internal feelings in columns 3 and 6. A family's positive reaction to the marriage had a large positive and significant effect on feelings of social inclusion for TOP3 but not for the broader ACCEPT measure. (Separate models substituting the perception that families were more accepting of the partner, not shown here, show similar effects for feelings of social acceptance but no significant effect on rating acceptance in the top three effects of marriage.) The marginal effects of the other independent variables, including the privilege interaction term, were not significantly affected by including the family acceptance variable.

Accepting Context Hypothesis (Hypotheses 4a and 4b)

Finally, having accepting families and having larger weddings were pre-dicted to increase feelings of social inclusion. The accepting context hypotheses (Hypotheses 4a–4b) involved using the family acceptance variables as indepen-dent rather than dependent variables. People with larger weddings and accepting families were more likely to report feelings of social inclusion (Models 3 and 6). Larger weddings also increased the likelihood that families were supportive and that they were more accepting of partners (Models 7–10).

Discussion

In general, the probit models offered little support for the salience hypotheses but somewhat more support for the accepting context and privilege hypotheses.

Salience

In general, the salience measures did not influence social inclusion. Indeed, one surprising result was that receiving health care benefits as a result of being married reduced the likelihood that the respondent reported social inclusion as one of the top three benefits of marriage. This finding suggests that perhaps those who received health care benefits were marrying for practical reasons and were less sensitive to the social inclusion aspects of marriage. In contrast, receipt of health benefits was a positive predictor for the external measures of family acceptance of the marriage, perhaps because of concern about an uninsured relative or because health insurance is a marker of the public legitimacy of the marriage.

The only significant effect of the salience measure of whether the respondent did not seek a religious service was a fairly large positive impact on the probability of a positive reaction by the respondent's family. Such an unexpected effect could be the result of families with more traditional religious views that frown on the idea of same-sex marriage having less disapproval (or more approval) of nonreligious weddings of same-sex couples.

Privilege

The privilege hypothesis received strong support with respect to the internal measures of social inclusion. White, high-income men were more likely to report feelings of social inclusion than people in other race–sex–income groups. The interaction term's effect on social inclusion was still present after controlling for family acceptance, suggesting that the privilege effect was robust. Furthermore, that the sex, race, and income variables, entered alone or in an interaction term, did not have the same positive effect on the perceptions of family acceptance suggests that the privilege effect was not driven by differential family acceptance of a married same-sex couple by race, class, or gender.

Accepting Context

When the respondent's family was more accepting of his or her partner or of the respondent's marriage, respondents were more likely to report feeling socially included. Receiving more support from friends and family, measured here as having a larger wedding, also increased the likelihood that respondents felt more socially included as a result of getting married.

General Discussion

Overall, findings from both studies presented in this article support the idea that public policies have an impact on individuals' feelings and experiences of social inclusion. Two separate datasets, one qualitative and one survey, from two different countries produced clear evidence that being allowed to marry enhances feelings of social inclusion for LGBT people. The data from the Netherlands shows that gaining the right to marry also reduces feelings of exclusion, including for individuals who choose not to marry.

The data from Massachusetts suggest that the feelings of social inclusion and experiences of greater family inclusion vary across individuals. Because this study was the first to address this issue, the conceptual framework and findings were largely exploratory. Nevertheless, the findings are intriguing. First, some individuals might marry for more practical reasons, and those practical decisions might have little to do with feelings of social inclusion. Another way to think about

the findings for Massachusetts is that the practical reasons might be a substitute reason for marrying for some, whereas other individuals marry for reasons related to wanting to feel included or for other emotional reasons (see Badgett, 2009).

Second, individuals in categories that are economically privileged (as well as privileged in other ways, perhaps), such as White people and especially high-income White men, seem to experience larger gains in internal feelings of social inclusion. Those enhanced feelings are not the result of differential family acceptance. Rather the findings for the privilege hypothesis might have more to do with different norms of marriage behavior across race and class, or they might have more psychological roots in individuals' valuing of their privileged positions in those other domains.

Third, other individuals in respondents' lives appear to have a strong influence on the feelings of social inclusion for the LGBT people surveyed in Massachusetts and for the Dutch couples interviewed. Larger weddings and supportive families were important predictors of internal feelings of social inclusion. This positive influence of an accepting context is consistent with the claim that heterosexuals see marriage as appropriate for same-sex couples and that friends and family are signaling inclusion in their interactions with same-sex couples who marry (Badgett, 2009). Also, while winning the right to marry might itself be a signal of social inclusion, as in the Dutch case, continuing contestation of marriage rights leaves an important role for a couple's larger social setting to enhance the message inclusion felt by same-sex couples.

These findings of individual variation suggest that future research should seek more nuanced understandings of the determinants of feelings of social inclusion. Likewise, policy frameworks that have simple in-or-out definitions of inclusion will miss important influences on the extent to which marginalized groups experience opportunities for full participation in society. Those policy frameworks should take into account other factors that might affect the actual degree of inclusion felt by individuals, such as attitudes toward LGBT people or the larger context of social inequality related to race and class. In other words, public policies that allow more individuals access to important institutions, such as marriage, are important and necessary first steps but are not sufficient actions for full inclusion.

Finally, although much of the policy debate focuses on material benefits and legal rights, this study finds that at least some of the psychological benefits of the right to marry come from feelings of social inclusion. However, public policies that provide material benefits and legal rights through legal statuses other than marriage, such as civil unions or domestic partnerships, might not have either the same psychological benefits. Those alternative statuses were created to provide benefits and rights while preserving marriage for heterosexual couples solely, maintaining the exclusion of same-sex couples. Furthermore, these new statuses have no existing occupants to make same-sex couples "included" in anything, much less in a socially meaningful relationship. Nevertheless, some research on

civil unions finds some similar effects to those seen in this study in terms of feelings of social inclusion for some couples, whereas other individuals felt a remaining sense of exclusion from the fuller level of inclusion related to marriage (Rothblum et al., 2011). Future research should compare the impact on same-sex couples of having right to marry with the impact of other separate legal statuses.

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