

STILL IN LOVE:
AN EXAMINATION OF LONG TERM SAME SEX UNIONS

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We hereby recommend that this thesis prepared under our supervision by Jaime Lynn Shafer entitled STILL IN LOVE: AN EXAMINATION OF LONG TERM SAME SEX UNIONS be accepted as fulfilling, in part, requirements for the degree of Masters of Art and the Book.

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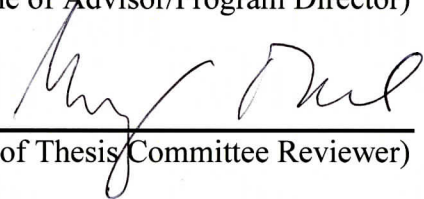
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THESIS STATEMENT

Relationships are about the people in them. Choosing a partner that provides the right balance can alter the value of any relationship. After briefly surveying the history of marriage in the United States, this thesis will examine five long-term same-sex couples illustrating how same-sex unions are quite similar to opposite sex unions. Each couple faces challenges in the home, in the work place, and in their personal lives; each weathers the same struggles that opposite sex couples encounter. The differences between heterosexual and homosexual unions are so negligible, and mandate a redefinition of marriage in society.

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INTRODUCTION

Relationships are about the people in them. Choosing a partner that provides the right balance can alter the value of any relationship. After briefly surveying the history of marriage in the United States, this thesis will examine five long-term same-sex couples illustrating how same-sex unions are quite similar to opposite sex unions. Each couple faces challenges in the home, in the work place, and in their personal lives; each weathers the same struggles that opposite sex couples encounter. The differences between heterosexual and homosexual unions are negligible and mandate a redefinition of marriage in society.

The couples examined in this thesis made extraordinary contributions to the arts, education, literature, civil rights, and law despite the lack of legal recognition of their union. Each in long-term pseudo-marriages defied societal norms—and even made strides towards changing them. Society has for many years regarded same-sex unions as going against the norm and maintained that they are unnatural; however, this thesis will prove that same-sex unions are not only common, but also quite similar to opposite sex unions.

Same-sex marriages have been documented as early as the tenth century.¹ Ancient texts found in libraries around the world record ceremonies that were performed for both opposite sex and same-sex unions.² Although our media sources, politicians, and various religious groups would have the public believe that same-sex marriage was never approved of in history, the documentation of these unions proves that not only did people approve of same-sex unions but also sanctioned them in various religious ceremonies.

History shows that the validity of these unions was greatly dependent upon the rulers or leaders of the time, much as they are today.

Marriage has been defined differently throughout time and within the realm of each society. Based upon the overall goals of each respective society, the church or governing body dictated the policies that would rule marriage. For thousands of years, marriage was primarily identified as a means to shape the community, and no consideration was given to love or the personal desires of the individuals involved. Matches were “more about property and politics than personal satisfaction, this reality also shaped people’s expectations about love.”³ It was not until the eighteenth century in Western Europe and America that marriage became the individuals’ choice—a focus on love.⁴

In the United States, marriage has been defined and redefined based upon the evolving needs of our country. Our founding fathers defined marriage in a way that would shape the society that they were hoping to develop. “From the founding of the United States to the present day, assumptions about the importance of marriage and its appropriate form have been deeply implanted in public policy, sprouting repeatedly as the nation took over the continent and established terms for the inclusions and exclusions of new citizens.”⁵

Despite the changes in legality and the definition/evaluation of marriage, the importance of a couple’s relationship remains at the forefront of any discussion. A couple can prosper and thrive if there is the right combination of support and communication. A partner whether male or female can act as the balancing force to the other. In the same regards, one’s choice of partner can be detrimental to one’s personal,

or career goals. This is true regardless of the couple's label—whether homosexual or heterosexual.

While the legal recognition of a couple's bond does not always impact the success of a relationship, homosexual couples have experienced added challenges due to the political and intolerant societies. Recent events have made monumental changes in government and civil rights.

CHAPTER I

MARRIAGE IN THE UNITED STATES

In March of 2013, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of Edie Windsor and two California couples, Kris Perry and Sandy Steir and Paul Katami and Jeff Zarillo. Two cases—one challenging the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA),⁶ which “provided a federal definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman”⁷ and one challenging the California ban on same-sex marriage,⁸ were brought before the court questioning laws that excluded same-sex couples from receiving the same rights and benefits as opposite-sex couples. These rulings had an immediate impact and provided opportunities for people who have, until this time, been denied basic rights.

As the United States began to take shape and its early government formed, “organizers sought to impart a new social order by instituting Christian ideals on its people.”⁹ Although the founding government “established no national church, but said it would separate church and state and observe religious tolerance,”¹⁰ Christian ideals seeped through and were “filtered through legislation.”¹¹ These principles were ingrained in the people and could not be separated. Marriage was extremely important, as it was (and still is) a direct method of shaping “the body politic.”¹² The government could use marriage as a way to control the behavior of the population. By allowing some people to participate in the institution of marriage and denying others, the public drew a line among its citizens.¹³

Because of the strong Christian values infused in the people and politics, marriage was seen and enforced as one man and one woman. The roles that men and women

played were strict and to be abided by regardless of personal preference. When Edwin T. Denig, a fur trader, arrived in America in 1833, he observed Native American behavior “where males assume the dress and perform duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex!”¹⁴ Denig was shocked by what he considered non-traditional roles that formed in the Native American tribes. His statement emphasizes the roles that men and women were expected to play in society. Men were the head of the household. A husband was expected to provide and make decisions for his wife and children¹⁵. As a married couple, the man maintained control over everything. Women had no legal standing until 1920 when the women’s rights movement was born. Husbands “pledged to protect and support their wives and wives pledged to serve and obey their husbands.”¹⁶ This rule governing marriage sustained society for years. Marriage was a practical means of organizing society. Men and women had assigned roles and deviating from those roles had negative consequences.

The marriage rules not only governed how the opposite sex should act but also placed those of a differing race into specific roles within society. Interracial marriage had no place in society and was often met with “fines and compulsory divorce”¹⁷ and sometimes “mob attacks.”¹⁸ State laws often specified that any white person was forbidden to marry any person who had “non-Caucasic blood.”¹⁹

As the country formed and advanced, the idea of marriage and of what our society should look like also evolved. Eventually, the laws banning interracial marriage changed²⁰ and marriage became not a privilege but “one of the ‘basic civil rights of man,’ fundamental to our very existence and survival.”²¹ Of course, this only applied to

opposite-sex couples. As President Nixon stated in 1970 when same-sex couples argued that they too had the right to marry, “I can’t go that far—That’s the year 2000.”²²

President Nixon was rather close in his estimation of when same-sex marriage would become legal, at least in some states. The path that led to the legal recognition of same-sex marriage has been extensive and arduous. The stigmatization of gay people has long been equated with mental illness well until 1973, when “the American Psychiatric Association voted to remove homosexuality from its list of mental disorders.”²³ Although the American Medical Association and the American Psychological Association followed in their footsteps²⁴, attitudes and ideas about gay people, like the ideas of marriage, have been ingrained in society. It will take years of struggling to re-structure how society views gay individuals or to see them as equals—a struggle that is still being played out today. The most recent Diagnostic Statistical Manual (DSM)²⁵ still provides the option to diagnose homosexual/gender identity as a problematic behavior.

The battle to see homosexuals as productive, contributing members of society continues to be challenging. Small steps toward changing the public view were often met with backlash. In 1977, singer “Anita Bryant led a campaign to ‘Save Our Children’ from a newly enacted gay civil rights organization in Dade County, Florida.”²⁶ Her campaign promoted the idea that homosexuals were child molesters and that they would recruit and seduce children.²⁷ This type of campaigning continues throughout the United States, proving that changing minds about gay rights would be extremely difficult. Today, groups such as Heterosexuals Organized for a Moral Environment (HOME) and Restored Hope Network exist and continue to promote the same sort of messages that Anita Bryant did in 1977.

Despite these setbacks, activists continued in their efforts to change people's perceptions and to make political progress. Throughout the seventies and eighties, various advocates filed lawsuits addressing marriage, but each time were unsuccessful.²⁸

Finally, in 1990, three gay couples in Hawaii sought representation so that they could get married. Initially, the couples were all turned down, but one lawyer, "Dan Foley, the former director of Hawaii's ACLU, agreed to take the case."²⁹ Evan Wolfson, co-counsel³⁰, was passionate about the fight for marriage. He articulates the role of marriage as the "social and legal institution of this and virtually every other society."³¹ He said, "[Y]ou can't say that you're for marriage equality and then acquiesce in our [gay couples] exclusion from it."³²

"In 1993, the Hawaii Supreme Court provisionally ruled in favor of the couples, setting off a firestorm in Hawaii and in the rest of country. While the court was ultimately thwarted by a popular referendum enacted in 1998, its initial decision started the national conversation about same-sex marriage in the contemporary era."³³ Despite this success, there were numerous challenges ahead. Courts around the country were challenged as same-sex couples fought for their rights. "Movement advocates had to convince people—straight and gay—that marriage equality was fair and necessary, by making a case for it everywhere they could: bar associations, Rotary clubs, colleges, churches and synagogues, labor unions."³⁴ All parties were taking a stand either for or against same-sex marriage.

In 1999, the state of "Vermont introduced the country's first civil unions."³⁵ This breakthrough provided the small step that was needed in order to achieve similar status in other states. Although it was "an enormous victory," it was "still far from the ultimate

goal.”³⁶ States responses to same-sex cases varied, sometimes providing inspiration and sometimes set back. In 2006, New York State ruled against thirteen couples that sued for the right to marry.³⁷

As more lawsuits were filed, more and more states began to recognize that all people, not just heterosexual people, should be treated equally and denying these rights was unconstitutional. “In 2008, New York courts ruled that they would recognize same-sex marriages that were legally conducted out of state.”³⁸ It was a small step in the state of New York until marriage was officially recognized at the state level in 2011.³⁹ Advocates have continued to work towards marriage equality throughout the United States.

As of January 2014, the following states recognize same-sex marriage: Massachusetts—May 17, 2004; Connecticut—November 12, 2008; Iowa—April 24, 2009; Vermont—September 1, 2009; New Hampshire—January 1, 2010; District of Columbia—March 2, 2010; New York—July 24, 2011; Washington—December 9, 2012; Maine—December 29, 2012; Maryland—January 1, 2013; California—June 28, 2013, Delaware—July 1, 2013; Rhode Island—August 1, 2013; Minnesota—August 1, 2013; New Jersey—October 21, 2013; Hawaii—law will take effect December 2, 2013; New Mexico—December 19, 2013; Illinois—law will take effect June 1, 2014.⁴⁰

The Supreme Court rulings in June 2013 redefined same-sex unions and provided a much-needed ground with which advocates could begin to make headway in those states that still do not recognize same-sex unions. The federal government now recognizes marriages that have long been acknowledged at the state level, bringing state and federal governments one-step closer to common ground.

The lack of recognition, socially or legally, has not prevented couples from living together or maintaining long-term pseudo marriages—same-sex relationships and opposite-sex relationships alike. In fact, the role of marriage as a necessity for organizing our society has drastically been reduced in importance. “Divorce, single parenthood, and cohabitation among heterosexuals have already reshaped the role of marriage in society and its meaning in people’s lives.”⁴¹ Additionally, “same-sex couples [have] cohabitated without the legal and economic benefits that a marriage license confers.”⁴² Couples throughout history have maintained successful pseudo-marriages for years before the discussion regarding same-sex marriage began. In spite of the fact that same-sex relationships have been ignored and rejected, couples have experienced success in the face of contempt. Moreover, they have maintained prosperous careers and made great contributions to the arts, education, literature, civil rights, and law despite the lack of legal recognition of their union. Each one in long-term pseudo-marriages defied societal norms—and even changed them. The following five couples represent a rebellion against societal expectations of marriage and gender.

CHAPTER II

WALTER WHITMAN AND PETER DOYLE

Walt Whitman was born in 1819 in Long Island, New York.⁴³ His father was a carpenter and his mother stayed home to care for their eight children.⁴⁴ Whitman attended school until he was eleven and then worked as an apprentice for a newspaper.⁴⁵ He planned to become a teacher but later decided to focus on journalism, most likely a result of his time spent working for the newspaper.⁴⁶ He eventually landed a job as an editor at the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, a New York newspaper.⁴⁷

Whitman's experience at the newspaper gave him the know-how to print his own work. He self-published his first book of poems entitled *Leaves of Grass* in 1855.⁴⁸ His work was not received well.⁴⁹ Two more editions were eventually published; each time Whitman added more poems. In the third edition published in 1860, Whitman introduced the "Calamus" poems. The Calamus poems included "erotic passages describing homosexual affection."⁵⁰

Peter Doyle was born in 1843 in Limerick, Ireland. As a young child, his family immigrated to the United States, where they settled in Northern Virginia.⁵¹ Doyle had minimal formal education and little is known of his early life.⁵² At seventeen, Doyle joined the Confederate Army.⁵³ "He saw heavy action in several battles and was wounded at Sharpsburg in 1862."⁵⁴ After leaving the army, Doyle moved closer to Washington, D.C. where he worked as a blacksmith's assistant and eventually as a conductor.⁵⁵

Walt Whitman and Peter Doyle met by chance when Whitman boarded a horse-drawn streetcar in Washington, D.C. in 1865.⁵⁶ Doyle sold tickets for passage on the streetcar when he noticed Whitman. Doyle recalls, “We felt to each other at once...He was the only passenger, it was a lonely night, so I thought I would go in and talk with him.”⁵⁷ That evening Whitman rode the streetcar with Doyle until his shift was over. Doyle said, “we were familiar at once—I put my hand on his knee—we understood...from that time on we were the biggest sort of friends.”⁵⁸

Following their meeting, friends noticed a significant change in Whitman. The two men were conjoined for the next five years.⁵⁹ Friends knew that Doyle—Pete the Great—had been the change that Whitman needed. Whitman’s friend, William O’Connor noted, “A change had come upon him, the rosy color had died from his face in a clear splendor, and his form, regnant and masculine, was clothed with inspiration, as with a dazzling aureole.”⁶⁰ “Whitman [himself] happily explained the difference: ‘Love, love, love! That includes all. There is nothing in the world but that—nothing in all the world. Better than all is love. Love is better than all.’”⁶¹

Whitman and Doyle were opposites in every way. “Whitman was forty-five years old, six feet tall, and heavyset, while Doyle was twenty-one years old, five feet eight inches tall, and slender.”⁶² Whitman was an educated man, and Doyle had little education. Despite these differences, the two men drew upon their experiences in the Civil War.

Although Doyle had fought for the Confederate Army and Whitman supported the Union,⁶³ the two men bonded over their familiarities of the war. Whitman had volunteered as a nurse for injured soldiers, had seen his brother George suffer the

traumatic effects of the war, and had even taken care of him while he was temporarily discharged. The war impacted both of the men greatly and they drew upon these shared experiences.

Whitman's poems changed when he met Doyle. The overall tone of his earlier work was one of despair and sadness,⁶⁴ perhaps the result of his stressful personal life and his experiences as a nurse during the war. When Doyle entered his life, it changed Whitman. "Literary scholars have identified several poems—and specific lines from many others—that they have attributed to Doyle having become the poet's muse."⁶⁵

"O Captain! My Captain!" is perhaps the most famous of Whitman's work and the one that most scholars attribute to Doyle's influence. Doyle was present the night of April 14, 1865 in Ford's Theatre when Abraham Lincoln was shot and he had shared this experience with Whitman.⁶⁶ Other poems, such as "Come Up from the Fields Father," use the first name "Pete", something that Whitman had never done in his work.⁶⁷ Whitman's 1867 edition of *Leaves of Grass*, published not long after the two began their relationship, reflects Doyle's influence as well. "Specific lines that scholars point to is one about an old soldier burying his 'son of responding kisses'—the old soldier is thought to be Whitman, while the son who's being kissed is Doyle."⁶⁸ Other lines are "'Many a soldier's kiss dwell on these bearded lips'—with 'these bearded lips' alluding to the facial hair that Whitman wore."⁶⁹

Whitman is often "referred to as the father of free verse. He "liberated poetry from rhyme and meter, opening it up to the flexible rhythms of feeling and voice."⁷⁰ His relationship with Doyle is reflected in his work and in the publications of his poetry.

Scholars cite Doyle's influence for the removal of specific poems that expressed Whitman's anguish and lack of confidence from later editions of *Leaves of Grass*.⁷¹

In January of 1873, Whitman suffered a stroke. Doyle was one of many friends who came to his aid and helped nurse him back to health.⁷² Whitman's need for constant care prompted him to move in with his brother George and his wife. Although the distance separated them, their love for one another was documented in numerous letters.⁷³

As Whitman became increasingly in demand, his schedule prevented them from spending much time together. Whitman was giving many lectures and readings in the early 1880s, and by now was able to afford a housekeeper and nurse. Doyle's frustration with having to deal with the housekeeper and the nurse prevented him from visiting Whitman as he used to.⁷⁴

In early 1892, "Whitman lapsed into a coma" and died in the spring.⁷⁵ Doyle regretted having not made the efforts to visit him more often. He never maintained another relationship like the one he had with Whitman. After Whitman died, he dedicated his life to documenting his relationship with Whitman. He worked with Richard Maurice Burke, sharing his letters and experiences, which eventually were published in 1897 as *Calamus, A Series of Letters Written During the Years 1868-1880 by Walt Whitman to a Young Friend (Peter Doyle)*.⁷⁶ Peter Doyle passed away in 1907 due to kidney disease.

Without Doyle's influence, Whitman may have never reached the level of success he had. The writer is believed to have used his muse to escape his dreary tone and connect with a wider audience.

CHAPTER III

MARTHA CAREY THOMAS & MAMIE GWINN

Martha Carey Thomas, nicknamed “Minnie” during her childhood, was born into a family of Quakers in 1857. Her father was a Baltimore physician, and her mother was devoted to caring for their eight children. Their family was descended from the Whitalls of Philadelphia and could be traced back to the early settlers of 1680.⁷⁷ Carey, as she came to be known in her adult years, was a strong willed young lady who was greatly influenced in her views by her unconventional Aunt Hannah. She was extremely intelligent, and her parents encouraged her education by sending her to a boarding school that focused more on academics rather than social skills.⁷⁸ Carey enrolled in college and earned her degree from Cornell, one of the few universities that permitted women to attend. Upon graduation, Carey wanted to pursue a graduate degree, but no American university had such programs for women at the time.⁷⁹

Born in 1861, Mamie Gwinn’s Episcopalian family was prominent in the Baltimore community. Her father was the attorney general for the state of Maryland and her grandfather had been a member of the U.S. Senate. Mamie’s mother made certain that she was raised to be a respectable, young lady as was expected at the time. Delicate, fragile, and well groomed, Mamie exemplified the standards of the time for women. She was a true lady, well-educated with an appreciation for the arts.⁸⁰ Although Mamie was an ideal young woman, as she grew into adulthood, she longed to be free of the watchful eyes of her parents.⁸¹

Carey and Mamie met through a mutual friend in 1878. Initially, Mamie thought Carey was unladylike and unsophisticated. She was too outspoken, the exact opposite of what a lady should be. But Mamie was enticed by Carey's education and the two quickly became friends.⁸²

As their friendship blossomed, so too did their plans to escape the confines of the time. Mamie was eager to get out from under her parents watchful eye and experience the world on a grander level. Carey was anxious to enroll in a graduate program and to do so meant traveling and studying in Europe.⁸³ Together they arranged to make both of their desires a reality. Carey was accepted at Leipzig University in Germany, and Mamie convinced her parents that she should be the young woman to accompany her.⁸⁴

Correspondence indicates that the two maintained an intimate relationship. One such letter from Gwinn tells of her longing for Carey and her distress over their separation while in Germany. She says, "Tis 11:30 but I am awake, and longing for you. I lie on the sofa and don't undress because I am miserable undressing without you."⁸⁵

Together in Germany, Carey focused on her studies while Mamie read for her own gain and pleasure and offered support to Carey when needed. Men dominated the scholarly world and Carey was not warmly welcomed by all of the students. She had to prove herself with little support or encouragement.⁸⁶ She was determined to achieve and found that her professors were a bit more welcoming than the student body.⁸⁷ Carey knew that she could not receive a Ph.D. from Leipzig, but that the University of Zurich did welcome women.⁸⁸ She made arrangements to continue her studies and earn her Ph.D. Mamie, of course, accompanied her to Zurich.

Evidence suggests that Mamie's role in Carey's Ph.D. was unscholarly and perhaps would have resulted in Carey's dismissal from the University. Mamie assisted Carey a bit too much by writing her thesis dissertation. Although it is uncertain how much of Mamie's hand was involved in the writing, correspondence between the two women indicate Mamie's involvement was substantial.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Carey received her Ph.D. and sought out her next step.

When Carey returned to the United States, she was hired as the Dean of Faculty at Bryn Mawr College. As the dean, Carey's duties overwhelmed her. She enlisted Mamie's help in all matters from scheduling, arranging courses, and making faculty appointments.⁹⁰ Once again, Mamie proved invaluable to her professional life and being apart upon their return to the United States made it more difficult professionally and personally.

Carey was extremely resourceful as dean and made sure that the newspapers were well aware of her work. She used this publicity as a bargaining point with the board when she wanted to create the first graduate program in the United States that welcomed women. By promoting her work and placing herself in the public eye, the board could not refuse Carey for fear that they would lose her. "In 1885, Martha Carey Thomas made history by creating the first graduate program in the United States that admitted female students."⁹¹

Mamie and Carey were also eager to be together again.⁹² Mamie had returned to her parent's home upon arrival in the United States, and Carey had moved into housing on the Bryn Mawr campus. Mamie was miserable while under her parent's watchful and controlling eye.⁹³ She longed to be back with Carey. The two devised a way of making

this happen. Carey was, as Dean of Faculty, in charge of determining which graduate students would receive fellowships. She had the ability to grant her good friend and partner the first such honor.⁹⁴

Mamie moved into the “Deanery” and the women returned to their previous living arrangement. Mamie again assumed her role in assisting Carey with her duties as dean, while working on her own studies. She wrote Carey’s lectures, exams, determined readings for the students, assigned research papers, and even graded student work.⁹⁵

Carey and Mamie resumed their relationship but things were not always perfect between the two. Carey maintained her love for Mamie, but she was not to be satisfied by monogamy. Although she was committed to Mamie and loved her, she “had different needs, and different persons helped to satisfy them.”⁹⁶ Mamie was aware of Carey’s interest in other women and tolerated her partner’s infidelity for only so long.

Carey’s role at Bryn Mawr grew more demanding. In 1894, when the current president retired, Carey assumed the role. Accepting the position meant that she would take on the responsibilities of the president while retaining her current responsibilities as Dean of Faculty.⁹⁷ Mamie completed her program and was hired as an English professor, continuing to assist Carey in her role as president.

Carey became president and her first goal was to increase enrollment at the school. In order to do so, she also needed to fundraise. She called upon her childhood friend, Mary Garrett, who she had known in Baltimore.⁹⁸ Mamie was not fond of Mary and discouraged the contact for fear of the two developing an intimate relationship. Mamie’s concerns were justified.⁹⁹

Mamie's ill mother provided the perfect opportunity for Carey to spend time with Mary. On the weekends, Mamie would go visit her mother and Carey would invite Mary to come stay with her on campus. At first, Carey was able to keep her relationship with Mary a secret, but Mamie eventually figured it out. "She wrote Thomas, while visiting her mother, that 'Carey Thomas and Mary Garrett have become as familiar as Carey Thomas and I are. I have been positioned in the role of the first wife, and the first wife these days is frequently feeling forgotten.'" ¹⁰⁰

Garrett offered financial support to Bryn Mawr on the condition that Carey remain the president. "As Mary saw it, with her money she had installed Carey in the Bryn Mawr presidency. Mary had her requirements: Carey had to remain in office. But as long as she was there, Mary was hers." ¹⁰¹ The relationship between Carey and Mary led Mamie to seek out her own affair.

In 1895, Carey hired Alfred Hodder to teach English literature. Mamie took an instant liking to him and the two developed an intimate relationship. ¹⁰² Carey was extremely upset for a number of reasons. First, she feared that Mamie would reveal her secrets about relying on Mamie for so much of her work at Bryn Mawr. Second, she didn't want to share Mamie even though she maintained a relationship with Mary. ¹⁰³ Mamie eventually married Hodder in 1904. ¹⁰⁴ She and Carey parted ways and never spoke again. ¹⁰⁵

While their relationship was mutually beneficial, Carey may have gained more than Mamie, representing how one's choice of partner can be unequal and lead to dissolution. While this couple achieved great strides for education, Carey's one-sided success and demands on Mamie proved too unbalanced for the relationship to last.

Mamie left and sought out a less demanding partner that required her to only fill a portion of the supportive role.

CHAPTER IV

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS AND FRANK MERLO

Thomas Lanier Williams, born March 26, 1911, in Mississippi,¹⁰⁶ changed his name legally to Tennessee while in college.¹⁰⁷ He was born into a working class family with two siblings. His father was a traveling salesman¹⁰⁸ with an addiction to alcohol,¹⁰⁹ and his mother stayed home to care for the couple's children.¹¹⁰ After Tennessee became ill at a young age, his demeanor and physical ability were forever altered. He could no longer maintain the boisterous activities typical of most young children, but was limited to quiet play. He took to reading and allowed his imagination to run wild.¹¹¹

After Tennessee graduated from high school, he enrolled in college at the University of Missouri, where he majored in journalism.¹¹² During this time his sister Rose, who had experienced severe emotional problems throughout her life, had become increasingly worse. Tennessee's parents permitted doctors to perform a lobotomy on Rose, severely affecting her emotional and intellectual abilities. Rose was never the same and Tennessee was extremely distraught over this.¹¹³ Due to financial issues and poor grades, Tennessee left college and worked with his father in the shoe business. After three years, he returned to school, enrolling at the University of Iowa as a theater major.¹¹⁴

Upon graduation, Tennessee moved to New Orleans where he could openly live his life and pursue his writing. He "liked [New Orleans because] the city provided him with ample opportunity to act on the same-sex desires he'd been feeling for several years."¹¹⁵ He worked as a waiter to pay the bills and in 1939, he "entered a competition

sponsored by an organization committed to encouraging new theatrical talent.”¹¹⁶

Although he didn’t win the competition, he did find an agent in New York City.¹¹⁷

In 1941, Tennessee moved to New York City and by 1944, he had found “producers who were willing to finance a Broadway staging of [his] play titled *The Glass Menagerie*.”¹¹⁸ His play was a huge success and was named “the best new play of the year” by the New York Drama Critics’ Circle.¹¹⁹ Three years later, *A Streetcar Named Desire* opened with great success. Hailed by critics as magnificent, the drama received “the most prestigious award possible for theatrical work, the Pulitzer Prize.”¹²⁰

The constant work took its toll on Tennessee, and he escaped to Europe in 1947 without a word to anyone.¹²¹ He thus embarked on the longest period of inactivity in terms of his writing.¹²² Tennessee began enjoying the sexual freedoms that Europe offered and often took too many risks. He took up drinking whiskey and eventually supplemented his alcohol with pills.¹²³ When Tennessee didn’t arrive in London for the premiere of *The Glass Menagerie*, his agent and family grew increasingly concerned. He later told them via telegram what he had overdosed on sedatives.¹²⁴ Tennessee returned to New York after this episode where he eventually ran into Frank Merlo, and the two began an intimate relationship.¹²⁵

In 1922, Frank Merlo was born into a poor Sicilian family in New Jersey. “[T]he Merlo home didn’t have indoor plumbing—that was defined by a strong work ethic and a commitment to retaining its Sicilian heritage.”¹²⁶ Frank enlisted in the Navy after his high school graduation and served during World War II. He received commendations and was honorably discharged, thus returning to New Jersey. Eventually he rented his own apartment and worked as a truck driver.¹²⁷ Friends and relatives of described him “as a

highly responsible and mild-mannered young man who was well liked by everyone who knew him.”¹²⁸ Frank’s favorite pastime was seeing Broadway plays in New York City.

Frank and Tennessee crossed paths for the second time in the New York City deli.¹²⁹ Tennessee invited Frank and his (heterosexual) friend back to his apartment for a picnic. Frank’s friend understood (more than Frank thought) about their attraction to one another and left the two alone.¹³⁰ From that point on the two men embarked on a long-term relationship, one that would “stabilize the playwright’s life so his creative juices could begin flowing again.”¹³¹ Tennessee says in his memoirs “that it became unmistakably clear to me that my heart, too long accustomed to transitory attachments, had found in the young Sicilian a home at last.”¹³² The two moved in together and from then on Frank became the one constant in Tennessee’s life.

Frank took it upon himself to organize Tennessee’s belongings and life so that he could focus all of his time on writing.¹³³ They traveled together and Frank always made sure that Tennessee had whatever he needed. Often they would visit Tennessee’s grandfather in Key West, Florida, residing with him whenever they went. Eventually, Tennessee purchased the house his grandfather lived in and allowed Frank to manage it. In Frank’s capable hands, Tennessee felt it would be a worthwhile investment.¹³⁴

Tennessee’s friends and family saw the benefits of their relationship and credited Frank with providing order in his otherwise very chaotic life, not to mention, reducing the amount of alcohol and drugs that Tennessee consumed.¹³⁵ All was not perfect in the couple’s relationship; Frank’s love for Tennessee was perhaps greater than Tennessee’s love for him and the “imbalance produced guilt and paranoia in the playwright.”¹³⁶ Frank expected Tennessee to remain faithful to him, which was problematic for Tennessee.

When the opportunity arose, Tennessee would seek out the pleasures of casual sex.¹³⁷ He often grew restless when Frank was around too long.

Frank's impact on Tennessee's work could be seen in various plays. The most prominent was *The Rose Tattoo*.¹³⁸ Williams wrote in his *Memoirs* that the play "permeated with the happy young love for Frankie."¹³⁹ He was often criticized for creating work that was too personal to which he replied, "all true work of an artist must be personal, whether directly or obliquely, it must and it does reflect the emotional climates of its creator."¹⁴⁰

Tennessee's love for Frank didn't stop him from pursuing romantic encounters with other men, but as he stated in his *Memoirs*, "The love had gone sick, yes, but it was as deep as ever."¹⁴¹ Their relationship had become continually strained, and unbeknownst to Frank, Tennessee had begun using drugs and alcohol habitually again.¹⁴² In late 1962, Frank was diagnosed with lung cancer, while Tennessee was vacationing in Europe. When Tennessee returned to New York, he immediately went to Frank. His cancer was inoperable, and he was given six months to live.¹⁴³

Tennessee had visited him on the day he died, not realizing that it would be the last time that he would see him alive. He noted in *Memoirs* that Frank was tired from all the visitors, but told Tennessee not to leave because he was used to him. Tennessee said, "The statement of habituation was hard to interpret as an admission of love, but love was never a thing that Frankie had been able to declare to me except over a long-distance phone."¹⁴⁴ Frank died later that night, and Tennessee "went into a seven-year depression."¹⁴⁵

Tennessee's life took a downward turn. He consumed excessive amounts of alcohol and drugs, and sought out the comforts of strangers. He continued to write, but nothing came close to the quality of work he produced in his early years. In 1983, Tennessee choked to death in his apartment.¹⁴⁶

Their relationship was so strong and provided so much support for Tennessee—despite all the problems they encountered—that he was never the same. In his Memoirs he wrote that his friends “knew that I had lost what had sustained my life.”¹⁴⁷

CHAPTER V

AUDRE LORDE AND FRANCES CLAYTON

Audrey Geraldine Lorde was born Harlem, New York in 1934. The third child of Byron and Linda Lorde, immigrants from the West Indies, Audre was a stubborn and precocious child.¹⁴⁸ Her parents were very strict and offered little emotional support or affection to their children. Audre remembers her father as “a hard-working, silent, shadowy figure, who shared little intimacy with his daughters, save for the evening ritual of greeting him with a kiss when he returned from work.”¹⁴⁹ Her mother, who was in charge of raising the children, was a “Roman Catholic, emotionally distant mother by whom she was both intimidated and erotically fascinated.”¹⁵⁰

Audre had developed a love of words and poetry by the time she was twelve.¹⁵¹ While in school, she and a group of friends met regularly to share their poetry before the day started. This was essentially the first writer’s group to which she belonged. She excelled in school and was offered a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College, but went on to study at Hunter College because her parents couldn’t afford the additional tuition.¹⁵² Disappointed but determined, she decided to find a job so that she could move out of her parent’s house while attending school.

In high school, Audre began to acknowledge her feelings towards people of the same-sex. “Her journal records an eroticized fascination with her friends’ hair, clothing, and bodies; longings for their approval; her unrequited crushes on the teachers to whom she gave flowers and cards on their birthdays...and her anger and sense of rejection when her affections were not returned.”¹⁵³ On her own, she began to “shelter” her friends by

allowing them to live with her in her apartment. Many of these friends were lesbians or interracial couples and Audre, having been surrounded by lesbians, decided that she was going to enter into a lesbian relationship.¹⁵⁴

Frances Clayton, born 1926 in Illinois, was the youngest of nine children in a poor Methodist family. Her father was a minister, and they moved often, contributing to Frances' shyness and lack of friends. Frances found solace in her education.¹⁵⁵

In 1949, she graduated from Indiana University, where she had studied under the famed professor B.F. Skinner. Skinner was the leader in behavioral psychology. Following her graduation from Indiana University, she enrolled in Brown University, where she graduated with a master's degree. She then went on to the University of Minnesota, where she earned her Ph.D. in psychology in 1954.¹⁵⁶ The academic world was male-dominated and provided additional challenges to Frances, but she was brilliant and viewed as "a rising star."¹⁵⁷ Frances made a name for herself with her research on animal behavior and became the first tenured female professor at Brown University.¹⁵⁸ Little is known of Frances' personal life. She lived alone and focused on her work,¹⁵⁹ occasionally maintaining intimate but ambiguous relationships with various men and women.¹⁶⁰

Frances and Audre met on campus at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi in 1968. Audre was a recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts grant for a poet-in-residence, age thirty-four, while Frances was an exchange professor on campus at age forty-one.¹⁶¹ Although, Audre was married with two children at the time, her marriage to Ed Rollins, a gay, white man, was unconventional and dissolving.¹⁶² As close friends,

they had decided to marry because both wanted a family and both felt the need for concealing their sexual identity.¹⁶³

While in Tougaloo, Frances and Audre discovered that they both had a passion for “racial justice and integration.”¹⁶⁴ Audre had embraced the civil right movement in August of 1962, when she attended the March on Washington. This experience changed her outlook and helped her embrace and become an active participant in the civil right movement, using her poetry as the vehicle to express her views.¹⁶⁵

Audre’s first book of poetry was also published during her time at Tougaloo. The *First Cities* propelled Audre into a professional arena.¹⁶⁶ Until this time, she had been published in various magazines and journals, but the publication of her book would open up more opportunities for her professionally.

Upon completion of her residence in Tougaloo, Audre returned to New York and told her husband that she was in love with Frances.¹⁶⁷ The two separated in 1970, at which time Audre took the children and moved in with Frances in Rhode Island.¹⁶⁸ They spent the summer together before Audre returned to New York. She and Frances maintained a long distance relationship with Frances coming to New York on the weekends to be with her.¹⁶⁹

The comings and goings of Frances began to take a toll on Audre. She was struggling with wanting to be alone and wanting to be with Frances. Frances stopped coming to New York in order to give Audre time to be alone.¹⁷⁰ Not only was she concerned about her relationship with Frances, but she was also concerned about defining herself as a lesbian in the professional community. This was also compounded by the fact that she was in love with a white woman.¹⁷¹

By 1971, the two women had agreed to live together, but this meant that Frances would have to give up her position at Brown in order to do so. When Audre had finalized her separation, Ed had insisted that Audre remain in New York with the children. By the time she and Frances had found a house, Audre had begun divorce proceedings.¹⁷²

Frances had a difficult time finding a new job near their new home in Staten Island. Eventually, she took a position at Queen's College teaching an introductory course in psychology. She focused on taking care of the children and managing the house so that Audre would have time to write.¹⁷³

Frances became a mother and housewife; she gave up her studies and research—something that she would have never done had she not fallen in love with Audre. Audre, on the other hand, began to excel and take on the professional role that Frances had given up. She gave readings and lectures, leaving Frances at home to care for the house and the children.¹⁷⁴ Her career and prominence in the professional world was taking off, and she was openly publishing as a black, lesbian.¹⁷⁵

Ironically, Frances provided exactly what Audre needed most during this time: stability and the time to work. However, this also created problems for the two women, as Audre “resented [Frances’s] lack of self-direction.”¹⁷⁶ As Audre continued to publish and become more recognizable in the literary world, Frances stood by her offering support and assistance whenever and wherever needed. Frances’s knowledge and experience in the mainstream publishing as an academic aided Audre in finding a literary agent who would establish her in the scholarly world.¹⁷⁷

Lorde’s next works *Coal* and *The Black Unicorn* focused on racial issues of oppression.¹⁷⁸ She succeeded in acquiring a contract with W.W. Norton & Company to

publish her works, placing her among an elite group of poets. Additionally, she “became the first out black lesbian to crash the gates of the literary mainstream.”¹⁷⁹ Despite this outward visual success, Audre still felt like an outsider because of her sexual orientation and color, not to mention gender.¹⁸⁰

Frances continued teaching at Queens College and taking care of the children while Audre often went away for long periods of time in order to give readings and lectures. Frances also financed Audre’s travels, as her teaching job at John Jay College barely paid her \$30,000.¹⁸¹ Frances was, however, a scholarly woman and wanted more from her career. In addition to teaching and taking care of the children, she had decided to continue her education, focusing on psychotherapy.¹⁸²

By the 1970s, Frances had set up her own private practice and boasted a full practice. She focused on assisting young women who were trying to navigate their sexuality and find their place in a society that was not accepting of homosexuality¹⁸³—still in high demand in 1970s New York City.

In the late 1970s, Audre was diagnosed with breast cancer.¹⁸⁴ Once again, she turned to Frances for support and guidance. She eventually had a mastectomy and chose not to have re-constructive surgery.¹⁸⁵ Her experience prompted her to write *The Cancer Journals*. In it, she focused on her experience, as well as, society’s false promises that women can be whole again after re-constructive surgery.¹⁸⁶

Her success with *The Cancer Journals* prompted her to write an experimental book titled *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name*.¹⁸⁷ In the book, she focuses on the idea that women, especially women of color, should not try and fit a mold. She contends, “...home and culture are concepts that feminists don’t have to define based solely on race

or nationality but can find within communities of supportive women.”¹⁸⁸ Zami was a huge success and earned Audre an invitation to teach poetry at Hunter College, which she accepted and began teaching in 1981.¹⁸⁹

While both Audre and Frances were experiencing great success in their careers, their relationship was beginning to unravel. Audre wanted an open relationship, while Frances wanted fidelity. The two couldn't come to an agreement, and Audre had, unbeknownst to Frances, begun an intimate relationship with another woman.¹⁹⁰

In the mid-1980s Audre's cancer had returned. Although she depended a great deal on Frances for support and assistance, she also wanted to end their relationship; she had fallen in love with another woman. She had resigned her job at Hunter College and moved to St. Croix to be with her new love. Frances retired and moved to Northern California.¹⁹¹

There is no doubt that Frances's support contributed to Audre's success as a poet, teacher, and activist. Audre acknowledged just how crucial Frances was to her life and career in her journals but felt that since she had cancer “she could justify being self-centered,” and so she ended her days with her new love.¹⁹² She died in November 1992.¹⁹³

CHAPTER VI

EDIE WINDSOR AND THEA SPYER

Edith Schlain was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1929. Edie's parents lost their home and business in the Great Depression (shortly after she was born).¹⁹⁴ Edie married her older brother's best friend, Saul Windsor. After less than a year, Edie told her husband that he deserved better, and the two split up.

She had graduated from Temple University, and after her divorce she relocated to New York City, where she took a job as a secretary and focused on her education. She enrolled in New York University for a master's degree in mathematics. She took computing classes and "applied for a job as a research assistant, programming an eight-ton UNIVAC computer for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission."¹⁹⁵

Edie began her first job at IBM, when she was hired to program computers. She worked her way to the top, becoming senior systems programmer, which was the highest ranking for a programmer. It was also a position that very few women could attain.¹⁹⁶

Edie's career was on solid ground, but her personal life was lacking. In a recent interview with Ariel Levy of *The New Yorker*, Edie recalled, "Anytime I would see two women walking on the street on a Saturday night, I would be jealous."¹⁹⁷ Edie was well aware of her attraction to women, but being openly gay was not really an option. People were not very accepting at this time. Around 1962, she said she "couldn't take it anymore," and she asked a friend to "take her where the lesbians are."¹⁹⁸

Thea Clara Spyer was born in 1932 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. She immigrated to the United States during World War II. Thea studied clinical psychology

and earned her Ph.D. from Adelphi University. She then went on to intern at St. Vincent's Hospital and Veterans Administration in New York City. Eventually, she became the Director of the Psychiatric Clinic at the International Center for the Disabled. She also served as the Clinical Consultant in Rehabilitation at St. Vincent's Hospital in Westchester. Finally, Thea focused on her private practice.¹⁹⁹

Eddie and Thea met at a restaurant called Portofino's in New York's Greenwich Village in 1965. They danced together all night until as Eddie says, "She got a hole in her stocking."²⁰⁰ From then on, "They would go to parties together dancing all the while, for two years until they started dating."²⁰¹ In 1967, Thea proposed to Eddie with a brooch rather than a ring. A ring, they believed, would have brought about too many questions, questions they really couldn't answer in the workplace at this time.²⁰²

They moved to Washington Square in Manhattan and then purchased a house together in Southampton, Long Island. After the Stonewall Riots in 1969,²⁰³ Eddie and Thea both became active in the gay community "marching and demonstrating for equal rights."²⁰⁴ They traveled together and enjoyed their friends and their success.

Thea was diagnosed with "chronic progressive multiple sclerosis"²⁰⁵ in 1977. In the beginning, the disease didn't really affect her life too much. She had to walk with a cane, but eventually relied on crutches and finally, a wheelchair.²⁰⁶ The two had to alter how they danced, but they continued to do so even as Thea's health continued to decline, it was after all one of their favorite pastimes. Eddie had retired from IBM after sixteen years, hoping to travel more, but Thea's illness prevented travel. Eddie took care of Thea as her illness progressed.

In 2007, after Thea's doctors told her she had a year left to live, the two decided to get married. They flew to Toronto, Canada with six friends and were married by Canada's first openly gay judge.²⁰⁷ Edie said they needed their friends to help them get married. Because Thea's illness had progressed so far, Thea couldn't lift her hand, so in order for Edie to place the ring on Thea's finger, a friend had to lift her hand for her.²⁰⁸ Marriage felt different to both women. They felt that they were finally a "member of a special species that can love and couple 'until death do us part'."²⁰⁹ The pair continued to demonstrate and remain active in support of equality. Less than two years after their wedding, on February 5, 2009, Thea died.²¹⁰

Edie and Thea's story varies from the previous four couples. The two shared a life together for over forty years, but in this particular case neither really acted in a solely supportive role in the relationship. The two equally shared roles and sustained one another emotionally throughout their careers and lives. It was only after Thea's death, when Edie realized the federal government would not recognize their legal marriage, that Edie took legal action, suing the United States for supporting and enforcing an unconstitutional law.

Edie had a heart attack two months after Thea died.²¹¹ She called it "broken-heart syndrome." A second, more serious heart attack followed, and Edie was hospitalized.²¹² Edie thought that this was the end, but something happened that gave her the boost she needed to continue on. A documentary, titled *Edie and Thea: A Very Long Engagement*, began getting attention and Edie was invited to speak at various events.²¹³

In the meantime, Edie had to pay the state of New York \$275,528.00²¹⁴ and the Federal Government \$363,053.00²¹⁵ in taxes. She was not entitled to the "exemption on

estate tax that applies to husbands and wives...and [she] did not think it was fair.”²¹⁶ She felt she was “being taxed on her gayness.”²¹⁷ DOMA, The Defense of Marriage Act, was signed into law in 1996 by then President Bill Clinton. DOMA stated that the federal government would recognize marriage between one man and one woman, thus any marriages between couples of the same-sex were viewed as invalid, regardless of the legal standing of gay marriage in their home state.

Eddie was the perfect representative for marriage equality. Her lawyer Robbie Kaplan spoke of all the pieces falling into place. In the September 30 issue of *The New Yorker*, Kaplan stated, “If she had asked me before there was marriage recognition in New York, I don’t know what I would have said.” But the foundation had been laid, and Kaplan took the case.²¹⁸

In June of 2012, “the Southern District of New York ruled in Windsor’s favor, and the ruling was upheld by the Court of Appeals in October. Two months later, the Supreme Court announced that it would hear Windsor’s case.”²¹⁹ The case had garnered national attention alongside Proposition 8, which would also be heard by the Supreme Court. Eddie would represent the gay community: hard working, dedicated, loving woman who had been with the love of her life for over forty years, standing by her spouse after terrible illness and finally death.

Kaplan said, “For people to embrace same-sex marriage, they needed to focus on the universal desire for romantic love and committed intimacy.”²²⁰ Eddie had an emotionally captivating story to tell and Kaplan knew that the public would connect with her. The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Eddie, announcing their decision on June 26, 2013.²²¹

Although the outcome was favorable for Edie, the ruling did not push all states to recognize equality for same-sex couples. The ruling only required the federal government to recognize same-sex marriages in states that currently granted and accepted same-sex marriages. So for those states where it is still illegal for same-sex couples to marry, nothing will be acknowledged until the state grants marriage equality.

Edie and Thea had no idea, when they began their love affair in the 1960s, that they would become the activists that inspired change for all same-sex couples. Even though Thea passed away, she was still with Edie throughout the process. Just weeks before Thea passed away she said to Edie, “Jesus, we’re still in love, aren’t we.”²²²

CONCLUSION

At the onset of this thesis, I was committed to the idea that same-sex relationships were different than opposite-sex relationships. Having experienced both, I was convinced that same-sex relationships were possibly even superior (perhaps due to the failure of my two previous opposite-sex relationships). I set about to prove this by researching the couples presented here.

However, at the end of my writing, as I reflected on the couples, I realized that each couple mimics the challenges faced by opposite-sex couples. They experienced similar trials and tribulations, regardless of gender or sexual orientation. Each couple encountered illness, familial troubles, professional challenges, and personal struggles. Couples, regardless of sexual orientation, wake up in the morning and have the same discussions: who is going to cook dinner, what they need from the store, and who will take the children (if there are children) to school.

The same-sex couples represented in this thesis experienced some of the same challenges within their relationship as opposite-sex couples. Carey Thomas and Mamie Gwinn represent a relationship that did not make it to the theoretical finish line. Carey was far too ambitious and focused mainly on her career and professional presence, neglecting Mamie and her needs. Audre Lorde and Frances Clayton, although they too did not make it, represented an example of a couple that managed to parent together. Frances became an effective and loving stepparent, a role that perhaps she never intended to take on in her lifetime until she met Audre. Even though the two parted ways, Frances still maintained a relationship with the children even after Audre died. Walt Whitman

and Peter Doyle reflect a role that we often see in heterosexual relationship, that of the parent-child role. Whitman, a man almost twenty years older than Doyle, often referred to his young lover as “son.” Tennessee Williams and Frank Merlo battled the struggles of addiction. Frank worked hard to try and keep Tennessee clean and focused so that he could do his best work, contributing to the literary and theatrical world. Despite Frank’s best efforts, Tennessee relapsed and spiraled back into his old habits. Finally, Edie and Thea faced illness in their relationship, but unlike the other couples their relationship survived all of the challenges. They were an example of a true partnership working together through any challenge that came their way.

As I reflected on my current relationship with my partner, I thought about my previous relationships and why those relationships failed while my current relationship continues to grow stronger every day despite all of the same challenges. I wondered if it really is a matter of gender?

As expected, there are advantages and disadvantages to both same-sex and opposite-sex relationships. Some disadvantages weigh heavier for same-sex couples than opposite-sex couples. The biggest disadvantage is represented at the start of this thesis—the legal recognition of same-sex unions. This challenge continues to be addressed at this time in various states around the country.

There is also a stigmatization associated with gay individuals that presents challenges in the workplace and community and in turn, make it harder for people/states to legally recognize same-sex unions. Edie and Thea are prime examples of how gay individuals needed to hide their sexual orientation, especially in the workplace. Edie said, after she retired and married Thea, that she spoke with her colleagues at IBM, and no one

suspected or knew that she was gay. The stigma associated with gay individuals has strong roots in our culture; although not addressed in this thesis, it certainly has impacted the way that people view gay individuals.

Having grown up in a small town, I can recount numerous stories of narrow mindedness and discrimination against gay individuals. In my previous employment, a fellow teacher was fired when she came out as gay. This type of discrimination still exists, and few laws protect people from this type of discrimination. Although, there are strides being made in order to rectify this, there is still a battle ahead in order to change ideas that are inherent in society.

The process of “coming out” can be quite painful and difficult in our society. As a young adult, coming out means being ridiculed, shunned, and often abused by fellow classmates. As an adult, the process can be equally difficult. For me, this meant ending a marriage and dealing with the aftermath, which included community backlash and the dissolution of friendships I thought were solid. It also included the possibility that I could lose my job. Furthermore, my husband tried to convince my parents that I was mentally incompetent and have me committed to a mental institution. When that did not work, he tried to send me to ex-gay therapy.

While these types of experiences are not impossible for heterosexual individuals, such repercussions are unlikely. Opposite-sex couples have not needed to hide their relationships, and it is assumed in our society that one is heterosexual rather than homosexual until otherwise indicated.

To the outside observer, especially those raised under the assumption of heterosexuality as the only reality, a homosexual relationship appears foreign. For some

it can be threatening—as communal changes often can be—or unique, but to those immersed in the loving, rewarding same-sex relationship, it is merely their happiest reality. The societal challenges that same-sex couples face are far more extreme than opposite-sex couples, although both share the same challenges within the relationship. It is not about the gender of the partner but about finding the right partner regardless of gender. Therefore, marriage laws will continue to be examined in our country until it is acceptable for same-sex couples to wed with the same respect and dignity as heterosexual couples.

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- ² Boswell, *Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe*.
- ³ Stephanie Coontz. *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 10.
- ⁴ *Ibid*, 7.
- ⁵ Nancy F. Cott. *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 2.
- ⁶ 1996 law signed by President Bill Clinton
- ⁷ George Chauncey. *Why Marriage? The History Shaping Today's Debate Over Gay Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 125.
- ⁸ Proposition 8 was....
- ⁹ Cott, *Public Vows*, 10.
- ¹⁰ Cott, *Public Vows*, 6.
- ¹¹ *Ibid*, 6.
- ¹² Cott, *Public Vows*, 5.
- ¹³ Cott, *Public Vows*, 1.
- ¹⁴ Elizabeth Abbott. *A History of Marriage From Same-Sex Unions to Private Vows and Common Law, The Surprising Diversity of a Tradition* (New York: Seven Stories Press: 2010), 13.
- ¹⁵ Abbott, *A History of Marriage*, 85.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid*, 85.
- ¹⁷ Abbott, *A History of Marriage*, 67.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid*, 67.
- ¹⁹ Abbott, *A History of Marriage*, 330.
- ²⁰ In 1967, the United States Supreme Court ruled in favor of Mildred and Richard Jetter, declaring the interracial marriage ban unconstitutional.
- ²¹ Coontz. *Marriage, A History*, 256.
- ²² *Ibid*, 256.
- ²³ Chauncey, *Why Marriage?*, 37.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, 37.
- ²⁵ This is the manual that is used by physicians, psychiatrics, and mental health workers, to diagnose and treat psychiatric disorders or mental health disorders. It is also used for insurance in order to justify treatment.
- ²⁶ Chauncey, *Why Marriage?*, 38.
- ²⁷ Chauncey, *Why Marriage?*, 39.
- ²⁸ Ariel Levy, "The Perfect Wife" *The New Yorker*, September 30, 2013, 57.
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- ³³ Jason Pierceson. *Same-Sex Marriage in the United States: The Road to the Supreme Court* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2013), 93.
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- ³⁶ *Ibid*, 58.
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, 58.
- ³⁸ Levy, "The Perfect Wife," 61.
- ³⁹ ProCon.org, "13 States with Legal Gay Marriage and 35 States with Same-Sex Marriage," *Procon.org*. Last modified on August 29, 2013.
<http://gaymarriage.procon.org/view.resource.php?resourceID=004857>
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- ¹⁰³ Ibid, 294.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 368.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 372.
- ¹⁰⁶ Williams, Dakin and Shepherd Mead. *Tennessee Williams: An Intimate Biography* (New York: Arbor House, 1983), 13.
- ¹⁰⁷ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 110
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁹ Williams, *Tennessee Williams*, 24.
- ¹¹⁰ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 110.
- ¹¹¹ Williams, *Tennessee Williams*, 17.
- ¹¹² Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 110.
- ¹¹³ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid, 111.
- ¹¹⁶ Ibid, 11.
- ¹¹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹¹⁹ Spoto, Donald. *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 147.
- ¹²⁰ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 112.
- ¹²¹ Spoto, Donald. *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), 141.
- ¹²² Ibid, 146.
- ¹²³ Ibid, 149.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid, 150.
- ¹²⁵ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 113.
- ¹²⁶ Ibid, 110.
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
- ¹²⁸ Ibid, 111.
- ¹²⁹ They had met previously in Provincetown, when they had spent one night together.
- ¹³⁰ Williams, *Tennessee Williams*, 169.
- ¹³¹ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 109.
- ¹³² Williams, Tennessee. *Memoirs* (New York: Doubleday & Company Inc., 1972), 156.
- ¹³³ Spoto, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 154.
- ¹³⁴ Ibid, 160.
- ¹³⁵ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 114.
- ¹³⁶ *Eminent Outlaws*, 73-74.
- ¹³⁷ Spoto, *The Kindness of Strangers*, 161.
- ¹³⁸ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 114.
- ¹³⁹ Williams, *Memoirs*, 162.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 188.

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- ¹⁴¹ Ibid, 189.
- ¹⁴² Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 117.
- ¹⁴³ Williams, *Memoirs*, 189.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 193-194.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁶ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 118-119.
- ¹⁴⁷ Williams, *Memoirs*, 195.
- ¹⁴⁸ De Veaux, Alexis. *Warrior Poet: A Biography of Audre Lorde* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004), 12-13.
- ¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 14.
- ¹⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ¹⁵¹ Ibid, 21-22.
- ¹⁵² Ibid, 32-33.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid, 28-29.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 38.
- ¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 96-97.
- ¹⁵⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 97.
- ¹⁵⁸ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 158.
- ¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 158.
- ¹⁶⁰ De Veaux and Streitmatter both paint a picture of a woman who wasn't interested in relationships with men or women unless on a superficial level. Streitmatter cites her relationships with women and De Veaux cites her relationships with women.
- ¹⁶¹ De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, 94-97.
- ¹⁶² Ibid, 74.
- ¹⁶³ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 159.
- ¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 160.
- ¹⁶⁵ De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, 80-81.
- ¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 96.
- ¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 99.
- ¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 113.
- ¹⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 118.
- ¹⁷¹ Ibid, 120.
- ¹⁷² Ibid, 122.
- ¹⁷³ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 160.
- ¹⁷⁴ De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, 126.
- ¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 139.
- ¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 153.
- ¹⁷⁷ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 161.
- ¹⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁷⁹ De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, 162-163.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 163.
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid.
- ¹⁸² Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 162.
- ¹⁸³ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁴ De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, 188.
- ¹⁸⁵ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 163.
- ¹⁸⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁸⁷ "Zami" is a derogatory Caribbean term for lesbian. See Lorde, Audre. *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (Trumansburg, N.Y.: Crossing Press, 1982).
- ¹⁸⁸ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 163.
- ¹⁸⁹ De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, 279.
- ¹⁹⁰ Streitmatter, *Outlaw Marriages*, 165-166.

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- ¹⁹¹ Ibid, 166.
- ¹⁹² De Veaux, *Warrior Poet*, 357.
- ¹⁹³ Ibid, 365.
- ¹⁹⁴ Gabbatt, Adam. Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer: 'A Love Affair That Just Kept On And On And On', *The Guardian* June 26, 2013. Accessed online on November 11, 2013.
- ¹⁹⁵ Levy, Ariel. The Perfect Wife *The New Yorker*, September 30, 2013: 56.
- ¹⁹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁹⁸ *Edie and Thea: A Very Long Engagement*. DVD. Directed by Susan Muska and Gréta Olafsdóttir. Philadelphia: Breaking Glass Pictures, 2010.
- ¹⁹⁹ Death notice for Thea Spyer, *The New York Times*, February 7, 2009.
- ²⁰⁰ *Edie and Thea: A Very Long Engagement*. DVD. Directed by Susan Muska and Gréta Olafsdóttir. Philadelphia: Breaking Glass Pictures, 2010.
- ²⁰¹ Ibid.
- ²⁰² Gabbatt, Adam. Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer: 'A Love Affair That Just Kept On and On and On' *The Guardian*, June 26, 2013.
- ²⁰³ Eminent Outlaws, 144-146. Police raided the Stonewall Inn, on a Friday night in June of 1969. Known as a hang out for gay and lesbians, uniformed police and plainclothes police entered the bar and began arresting people. Inspired by Black Power and the Black Panthers someone in the crowd shouted "We're the Pink Panthers!" and people started throwing things and set the plywood window coverings on fire. Police were trapped in the bar. The following night the riots continued. The riots were not the first to take place in the United States, riots had been occurring in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The Stonewall Riots may have been forgotten just like the San Francisco and LA riots but someone organized a march to commemorate the event.
- ²⁰⁴ Gabbatt, *Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer*, The Guardian.
- ²⁰⁵ Levy, *The Perfect Wife*, 58.
- ²⁰⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁰⁷ Gabbatt, *Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer*, The Guardian.
- ²⁰⁸ Levy, *The Perfect Wife*, 60.
- ²⁰⁹ Ibid.
- ²¹⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹¹ Gabbatt, *Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer*, The Guardian.
- ²¹² Levy, *The Perfect Wife*, 60.
- ²¹³ Ibid, 61.
- ²¹⁴ Ibid, 54.
- ²¹⁵ Ibid.
- ²¹⁶ Ibid.
- ²¹⁷ Levy, *The Perfect Wife*, 61.
- ²¹⁸ Ibid.
- ²¹⁹ Ibid, 62.
- ²²⁰ Ibid, 61.
- ²²¹ I was outside of the Supreme Court on the day the Supreme Court Justices announced their decision.
- ²²² Gabbatt, *Edith Windsor and Thea Spyer*, The Guardian.

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