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MARRIAGE LAW AND FAMILY LAW: AUTONOMY, INTERDEPENDENCE, AND COUPLES OF THE SAME GENDER

JENNIFER WRIGGINS*

Abstract: Contemporary family law and marriage law in the United States have been criticized by communitarian scholars and others as being too focused on individuals and individual fulfillment. These critiques make some valid points. It is also important, however, to emphasize that contemporary marriage law, for the first time, presents a model of equality and of reciprocal obligations. The Article articulates a broad framework of the functions of family and marriage law. It applies both this framework and the communitarian critique of family law to the issue of same-gender marriage. This analysis leads to the conclusion that same-gender marriage should be recognized. Arguments against same-gender marriage, discussed in the Article, contribute to the "atomistic" focus of contemporary family law.

Two people together is a work heroic in its ordinariness.

INTRODUCTION

The current debate about whether same-gender couples should have access to civil marriage ties in with larger discussions about the general direction of family law in the United States. Several communi-
tarian scholars in the family law area, including Mary Ann Glendon, Carl Schneider, and Bruce Hafen have focused on the ways in which family law has been retreating from duties and responsibilities, and increasingly has become focused rather exclusively on individuals and individual rights. They have expressed concern that this atomistic

1 The boundaries of the category of communitarian scholars are far from clear. As Marsha Garrison notes, “while communitarian thinkers are a diverse group, they uniformly favor a deemphasis on abstract individual rights; they tend to emphasize the individual’s embeddedness in various communities of interest, such as the family.” Marsha Garrison, An Evaluation of Two Models of Parental Obligation, 86 CAL. L. REV. 1125, 1127 (1998). Glendon and Hafen have been characterized as communitarian. Elizabeth S. Scott & Robert E. Scott, Marriage as Relational Contract, 84 VA. L. REV. 1225, 1227 n.3 (1998) [hereinafter Scott, Relational Contract]. Elizabeth Scott notes that Carl E. Schneider’s article, The Channelling Function in Family Law, 20 HOFSTRA L. REV. 895 (1992) [hereinafter Schneider, The Channelling Function], “suggests sympathy with at least some parts of the communitarian critique.” Elizabeth S. Scott, Rehabilitating Liberalism in Modern Divorce Law, 96 UTAH L. REV. 687, 708 n.82. Some of Schneider’s later work, such as Carl E. Schneider, Marriage, Morals, and the Law: No-Fault Divorce and Moral Discourse, 96 UTAH L. REV. 503 (1994) [hereinafter Schneider, Marriage and Morals], and Carl E. Schneider, Moral Discourse and the Transformation of American Family Law, 83 MICH. L. REV. 1803 (1985) [hereinafter, Schneider, Moral Discourse], even more strongly suggests sympathy with the communitarian critique. Milton Regan and Martha Minow also have been referred to as communitarian. See Scott, Relational Contract, supra, at 1227–28 nn.3 & 5.


3 Schneider, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1; Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1; Schneider, Moral Discourse, supra note 1.


5 Professor Glendon has extended this argument to other areas of law. See MARY ANN GLENDON, RIGHTS TALK: THE IMPOVERISHMENT OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE (1991) [hereinafter RIGHTS TALK]. See generally ROBERT BELLAH ET AL., HABITS OF THE HEART: INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMITMENT IN AMERICAN LIFE (1985). Martha Minow and others have been critical of family law’s focus on protecting autonomous individuals. Martha L. Minow, Forming Underneath Everything that Grows: Toward a History of Family Law, 1985 WIS. L. REV. 819, 894 (1985) [hereinafter Minow, Forming Underneath]. Minow has also argued that family law should be more concerned than it has been recently with duties and obligations. Martha L. Minow, All in the Family and in all Families: Membership, Loving and Owing, 95 W. VA. L. REV. 275, 304, 307 (1992-93) [hereinafter Minow, All in the Family]. Minow has also noted limitations of rights discourse, but has argued that rights claims actually imply relationships among interdependent community members. MARTHA MINOW, MAKING ALL THE DIFFERENCE: INCLUSION, EXCLUSION, AND AMERICAN LAW 268–69, 292–95 (1990); Martha Minow, Interpreting Rights: An Essay for Robert Cover, 96 YALE L. J. 1860, 1863–67 (1987). Milton C. Regan argues that family law should not be based on a model of individual private
focus has resulted in what Hafen has called a “waning of belonging.”

This Article will explore the following proposition: if we agree with scholars such as Glendon, Schneider, and Hafen that family law’s increased orientation toward individuals has drawbacks, and that the state should have a role in fostering positive connections between people, then we must conclude that marriage by couples of the same gender should be allowed.

The Article begins by reviewing, in Part I, various influential ideas about aspects of family law that have been articulated by Glendon and Schneider. Specifically, Schneider’s discussion of the five functions of family law (protective, facilitative, dispute resolution, expressive, and channelling) and Glendon’s more detailed discussion of the expressive function of family law are outlined. These ideas will serve as a framework, in Part III, for discussing the exclusion from marriage of same-gender couples.

Part II.A reviews some of these scholars’ critical observations, as well as the observations of Hafen, concerning the individual focus of twentieth century changes in family and marriage law. Their analysis is termed the “atomism critique.” Part II.B responds to the atomism critique specifically as it relates to marriage and marriage law. It finds that the critics’ account raises legitimate issues. The atomism critique, however, understates the positive aspects of contemporary marriage law: for the first time marriage is an anti-individualistic institution in ordering but should “promote a substantive moral vision of commitment and responsibility.”


Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 32.


See infra Parts I.A and B.

See infra Part II.A.
which both members of the couple are now recognized as individuals and owe equal duties and commitments to one another. Part II.C briefly reviews some of these scholars' comments about moral discourse in family law. This theme is termed the "decline of moral discourse" critique. Part II.D responds to this critique, arguing that moral discourse in family law has shifted at least as much as it has diminished.

Part III discusses the significance of the law's refusal to allow lesbian couples and gay male couples to marry. It argues that the atomism critique, at a general level, leads to a set of reasons for allowing such marriages distinct from the familiar rights-based claims. It further argues that the shift in moral concerns that has taken place in family law calls for recognition of such marriages.

The discussion in Part III is structured in terms of the various functions of family law as outlined by Schneider and Glendon. The expressive message sent by the law is that lesbians and gay men are essentially lone, atomistic individuals. This story told by the law is false, because gay and lesbian people do have intimate, long-term relationships that are both fulfilling for them and good for society. Gay male and lesbian couples by and large are left "outside the law," without the framework offered by legal marriage through which to order their relationships. Marriage can promote and support constructive connections between people and can counteract the "waning of belonging."

Part III also describes how family law largely fails to perform its instrumental functions of facilitation, protection, and dispute resolution for coupled lesbians and gay men, and argues that if marriage

10 See infra Part II.B.
11 See infra Part III.A.
12 See infra Part III.A.
14 See infra Part III. In arguing that the "framework offered by marriage" should be available to lesbian and gay couples, I am not taking a position in the debates about whether to characterize marriage as a status or as a contract, whether to emphasize one aspect or the other, or whether these aspects are opposed. See, e.g., REGAN, supra note 5, at 89–152; Scott, Relational Contract, supra note 1, at 1233–49; Katherine B. Silbaugh, Marriage Contracts and the Family Economy, 93 NW. U. L. REV. 65, 111–22 (1998) [hereinafter Silbaugh, Family Economy]. The defaults that marriage creates, however characterized, should be available to lesbian and gay male couples. See Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 3, at 1344–47. For further discussion of issues concerning marriage as a status or contract and the contractualization of marriage law, see infra notes 86–89, 241–46, and accompanying text.
15 See infra Part III.B.
was allowed it could more effectively fulfill these functions. Family law's channelling function tries to funnel lesbian and gay people into heterosexual marriage or independent existence. There is no valid reason for the current channelling that excludes gay men and lesbians from marriage; having a channelling option of marriage would be positive for society as a whole.

Finally, Part IV discusses some arguments why such marriages nonetheless should not be allowed, such as the argument that the quest for marriage by same-gender couples is actually a retreat from marriage, the argument that heterosexual marriage has greater potential for benefiting individuals and society than does same-gender marriage, and the argument that gay men and lesbians seeking marriage are actually repudiating morality by doing so. These arguments lack merit, particularly when considered in light of the preceding analysis. Indeed, refusing to allow marriage by same-gender couples furthers the trend toward atomization.

I. LAW'S FUNCTIONS IN FAMILY LAW

It is important to bear in mind that there is no consensus even as to what family law is and that there are basic issues in the field about what constitutes a family. As Bruce Hafen has noted, "[f]amily law

\[16 \text{ See } \text{infra Part III.B.}\]
\[17 \text{ See } \text{infra Part III.C.}\]
\[18 \text{ See } \text{infra Part III.C.}\]
\[19 \text{ See } \text{infra Part IV.A. The arguments discussed in Part IV are articulated in Lynn D. Wardle, } \text{Legal Claims for Same-Sex Marriage: Efforts to Legitimate a Retreat from Marriage by Redefining Marriage, } 39 \text{ S. Tex. L. Rev. 735 (1998) [hereinafter Wardle, } \text{Efforts to Legitimate].}\]
\[20 \text{ See } \text{infra Part IV.B.}\]
\[21 \text{ See } \text{infra Part IV.C. For additional material countering arguments against same-gender marriage, see, for example, sources cited in note 7, supra; Mary Bonauto et al., } \text{The Freedom to Marry for Same-Sex Couples: The Opening Appellate Brief of Plaintiffs Stan Baker et al. in Baker et al. v. State of Vermont, 5 Mich. J. Gender & L. 409 (1999); Mary Bonauto et al., } \text{The Freedom to Marry for Same-Sex Couples: The Reply Brief of Plaintiffs Stan Baker et al. in Baker et al. v. State of Vermont, 6 Mich. J. Gender & L. 1 (1999); Andrew Koppelman, } \text{Is Marriage Inherently Heterosexual?, } 42 \text{ Am. J. Juris. 51 (1997) [hereinafter Koppelman, } \text{Is Marriage Inherently Heterosexual?].}\]
\[22 \text{ Dean Judith Areen notes in her preface to a family law casebook, "there is no consensus about the proper scope of the [family law] course." JUDITH AREEN, CASES AND MATERIALS ON FAMILY LAW (3d. Ed. 1992). Areen also notes "the general lack of theory to employ in organizing the material." Id.}\]
\[23 \text{ Martha Minow notes that the three basic issues in family law are who is in a family, what benefits are obtained by being in a family and what obligations are incurred by being in a family. See Minow, } \text{All in the Family, supra note 5, at 275-76.}\]
has always been longer on practice than on theory." 24 There is no overarching theory of family law, and there is likewise no overarching theory of family law for gay men and lesbians. 25 However, the scholarly work outlined below concerning the various functions of family law provides an analytically useful framework for discussion.

A. The Five Functions of Family Law—Protective, Facilitative, Dispute Resolution, Expressive, and Channelling

Carl Schneider has written that there are five functions of family law: 26 the protective function, the facilitative function, the dispute resolution function, the expressive function, and the channelling function. 27 In his fascinating article entitled The Channelling Function in Family Law, 28 he outlines each of these functions. Regarding the protective function, he states: "[o]ne of law's most basic duties is to protect citizens against harm done them by other citizens. This means protecting people from physical harm, as the law of spouse and child abuse attempts to do, and from non-physical harms, especially economic wrongs and psychological injuries." 29 The second function "is to help people organize their lives and affairs in the ways they prefer. Family law performs this 'facilitative' function by offering people the law's services in entering and enforcing contracts, by giving legal effect to their private arrangements." 30 The third function "is to help people resolve disputes." 31 The current law of divorce "exemplifies family law's 'arbital' function, since today's divorce courts primarily adjudicate conflicting claims to marital property, alimony, and child custody." 32

The law's "expressive" function is also important to Schneider and other scholars. 33 Schneider writes that this fourth, expressive,
function, discussed in more detail in Part I.B, “works by deploying the law’s power to impart ideas through words and symbols.” The final function listed by Schneider is the channelling function. In the channelling function, “the law creates or (more often) supports social institutions which are thought to serve socially desirable ends.” The channelling function works partly as a way of performing law’s protective, facilitative, and dispute resolution functions, but the channelling function is also something more. To Schneider, the channelling function has several tasks: first to recruit, mold, and sustain social institutions, and second to channel people into institutions. It generally works by indirect means, such as by recognizing and endorsing institutions, rewarding participation in some institutions, disfavoring competing institutions, and penalizing non-use of particular institutions. It has an efficiency component, so that people entering an institution do not have to invent all the rules from scratch, and people outside that institution can have a clear understanding of the rules governing those within the institution.

Schneider uses the example of the laws surrounding corporations and marriage to describe the channelling function. According to Schneider, the advantages of institutions in family law are illuminated by situations involving their absence, such as stepparent situations. Channelling institutions “set bright lines which establish for all concerned what people's status is. They make it easier for people to predict the consequences of their own acts. Further, they pro-


54 Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 498. While part of the point of the expressive function is, as Schneider says, to alter behavior, he acknowledges that it is extremely difficult to draw clear conclusions from data in the family law area and thus determining the impact of any particular program or set of laws is often impossible. See id. at 521–22. For further discussion of the expressive function, see infra Part I.B.

55 See Schneider; The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 498
56 See id. at 505–07.
57 See id. at 502.
58 See id. at 503–05.
59 See id. at 498. Schneider says he is “wryly” calling this aspect an efficiency component. See Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 508–09.
60 See id. at 509. For instance, he uses the example that a person wearing a wedding ring sends a message that that person is not sexually available. See id.
61 See id. at 499, 505–07.
62 See id. at 499, 501–12.
63 See Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 510. In such situations there is often “discomfort and even distress” about the “unclear and uncomfortable” relationships between stepparents and stepchildren. Id. at 510 (citations omitted).
tect people from intrusive governmental inquiries." He uses Marvin v. Marvin, the famous California Supreme Court case involving implied contracts and equitable remedies for unmarried opposite-sex partners who break up, to illustrate the costs, unpredictability, and intrusion that can come from case-by-case inquiry. Channelling's institutions "necessarily have normative components and thus to some degree favor one such vision over the rest." Schneider notes that it is extremely difficult to measure and analyze data pertinent to family law issues, and thus it is difficult to measure the success of any particular program or set of laws. These functions of family law will be further discussed in Part III below in relation to marriage by same-gender couples.

B. Law's Expressive Function—The Story Told by Law

Mary Ann Glendon, like many others, has emphasized law's rhetorical, expressive functions. She notes in the introduction to her study comparing abortion and divorce law in the United States and Western Europe that law, "in addition to all the other things it does, tells stories about the culture that helped to shape it and which it in turn helps to shape: stories about who we are, where we came from, and where we are going." She writes:

> Indeed, it may be that law affects our lives at least as much by these stories as it does by the specific rules, standards, institutions, and procedures of which it is composed. Thus it is not an unworthy task for scholars to ask how law interprets the world around it, what analogies and images it employs,

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44 Id. at 521.
45 557 P.2d 106 (Cal. 1976).
46 See Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 514, 521. Glendon makes similar observations. See Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note 2, at 279-80.
47 Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 529.
49 See Glendon, Abortion and Divorce, supra note 2, at 8. See generally James Boyd White, Heracles' Bow: Essays on the Rhetoric and Poetics of the Law (1985); Regan, supra note 5, at 176-84; Regan, supra note 33, at 269-74.
50 Glendon, Abortion and Divorce, supra note 2, at 8.
what segments of history and what aspects of human experience it treats as relevant.\textsuperscript{51}

Quoting James Boyd White, Glendon states that law is "an element in the perpetual remaking of the language and the culture that determines . . . who we are as individuals and as a society."\textsuperscript{52} In the context of divorce and abortion law, she asks, "[w]hat stories are being told in these bodies of law at the present time? How do these stories affect what issues are raised and treated as important and which are excluded from discussion or perhaps even obscured from view? . . . What sorts of meaning is family law creating and what sort of society is it helping to constitute?"\textsuperscript{53} These questions will be considered as they relate to marriage of same-gender couples in Part III.A.

\section*{II. COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUES OF CONTEMPORARY MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LAW, AND RESPONSES TO THESE CRITIQUES}

It is a truism that the law pertaining to marriage and families in the United States has changed dramatically over the past fifty years. As Glendon notes, changes in marriage and family law are "but an aspect of the fact that society itself is in flux."\textsuperscript{54} Marriage, families, and the law concerning them have changed significantly throughout recorded history.\textsuperscript{55} "Over the centuries, family behavior and ideas about marriage and family life have undergone constant fluctuation."\textsuperscript{56} In the past, the financial and procreative aspects of marriage were central features of marriage; now, the affective aspects are seen as central to its meaning.\textsuperscript{57} This section broadly focuses on various developments and how they have been viewed in the work of Glendon, Schneider, and Hafen. As these scholars note, the developments in this field are complex and at times contradictory, and thus any attempt at system-

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Id.} Id.
\bibitem{Id.} Id.
\bibitem{51} Id.
\bibitem{52} GLENDON, \textit{TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW}, supra note 2, at 4.
\bibitem{54} GLENDON, \textit{TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW}, supra note 2, at 4.
\bibitem{55} See id. at 292-93; ESKRIDGE, supra note 7, at 96-98, 129-30. See generally GRAFF, supra note 55.
\end{thebibliography}
atic discussion runs the risk of being unduly reductionistic. The major critique this Article will discuss and respond to is the idea that family law has become too centered on individuals and their rights: the atomism critique. It will also discuss and respond to the idea that family law has retreated from concerns with morality.

A. The Atomism Critique

One prominent theme in these scholars’ work is that marriage and family law have become too focused on individuals, their self-fulfillment, and their rights. In The Transformation of Family Law, Glendon states:

[T]he legal imagery of separateness and independence [in U.S. family law] contrasts everywhere with the way most functioning families operate and with the circumstances of mothers and young children in both intact and broken homes. Yet the law holds self-sufficiency up as an ideal, suggesting that dependency is somehow degrading, and implicitly denying the importance of human intersubjectivity.

American marriage ideology, to Glendon, is that “marriage is a relationship that exists primarily for the fulfillment of the individual spouses. If it ceases to perform this function, no one is to blame and either spouse may terminate it at will.” According to Glendon in her comparative study of abortion and divorce in the U.S. and Western Europe, “[m]ore than any other country among those examined here, the United States has accepted the idea of no-fault, no-responsibility divorce.” Divorce law “carries a powerful ideology,

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58 See Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note 2, at 2-3, 103; Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 6; Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 512-19.
59 See infra Parts II.A and II.B.
60 See infra Part II.C and II.D.
61 Others have raised somewhat similar concerns. See, e.g., Minow, Forming Underneath, supra note 5, at 893-94 (noting that family law’s focus on autonomous individuals and their rights is reductionistic and stating that family law should nurture relationships); Regan, supra note 5, at 56-67 (noting that modern family law is focused on the individual and on emotional fulfillment which may result in more gratifying emotional relationships but make families less stable).
62 Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note 2, at 297. “Intersubjective” is defined as “involving or occurring between separate conscious minds.” Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary (1981). The noun form is intersubjectivity. See id.
63 Glendon, Abortion and Divorce, supra note 2, at 108.
64 Id. at 105.
sending out distinctive messages about commitment, responsibility and dependency.65 To her, the disjunction between the model of autonomous individuals, on the one hand, and the actual dependence of young children and their caretakers, on the other hand, has tremendous negative consequences, since young children and their caretakers so often end up in poverty after divorce.66

Schneider sounds a similar note regarding contemporary U.S. marriage. He states that "[m]arriage is ever more seen as a forum for satisfying human needs, as part of the search for psychological health and personal fulfillment. . . . This reconceptualization of marriage in therapeutic terms . . . tends to shift the focus of concern from duties to others to duties to oneself."67 He further states that "[i]f the primary duty is to oneself, independence becomes a virtue; dependence a fault."68 For example, Schneider notes that "[h]istorically, spouses were admired for sacrificing themselves for each other"69 but finds that is no longer the case.70

Bruce Hafen frames individualist autonomy as opposing the idea of belonging in approaching recent family law history.71 He observes that attitudes toward marriage have been shifting from "familistic"72 to

65 Id. at 106. Glendon argues that the law should develop clear principles for at least two different types of divorces, one for the short-term marriage where there are no children and the spouses (implicitly) are not economically dependent or interdependent. See id. A different set of principles should be applied for the largest single category of divorce; those situations where there are small children. See id. at 102. The majority of divorces involve families with small children. See GLENDON, ABORTION AND DIVORCE, supra note 2, at 102. Children’s needs should always be placed above adults’ needs, and divorcing parents’ “contracts” concerning children’s care should receive court scrutiny. See id.

66 Id. at 93, 99-103, 109-11.

67 Schneider, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1, at 525.

68 Id. at 526.

69 Id. at 533.

70 See id.

71 See Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 3. See generally Hafen, Constitutional Status, supra note 4.

72 Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 23. Hafen uses sociologist Pitirim Sorokin’s typology of personal relationships: familistic, contractual and compulsory. See id. at 23. “Familistic relationships involve an intermingled and organic unity in which shared commitments of mutual attachment transcend self-interest. Such interaction derives from an unlimited personal commitment, not merely to another person, but to the good of the relationship or the family entity as a larger order.” Id. at 23-24. Contractual relationships are very different:

[Such relationships] by definition are always limited in scope and intensity. Parties enter a contractual relationship primarily because of self-interest; therefore, their commitment is measured by the extent to which the relationship assures them of profit, pleasure, or service. . . . Neither party to a con-
contractual,\textsuperscript{73} and that family members increasingly tend to see themselves primarily as individuals rather than as parts of a larger group.\textsuperscript{74} He claims that “individualistic civil liberties approaches” have been “transfer\[red\] to the divorce context,”\textsuperscript{75} with attendant problems for the spouse who does not want the marriage to terminate.\textsuperscript{76} Hafen notes that law and other behavior-oriented disciplines such as psychotherapy and theology “are less likely to reinforce any serious hope for the ideal of enduring relationships of commitment.”\textsuperscript{77}

Hafen eloquently describes the importance of connections between people: “ours is the age of the waning of belonging.”\textsuperscript{78} In a section of an article that he describes as “consciously anecdotal and interdisciplinary,”\textsuperscript{79} he writes about how “belonging”-type relationships demand that we draw on internal resources that might not otherwise be tapped:

The innate human intuition to belong occurs, and is often fulfilled, at the most fundamental levels of both human experience and aspiration. . . . Without a sense of belonging, we may never know—and never see the effects of—the reservoirs of strength and compassion we carry within ourselves. That is a loss not only to ourselves, but a major loss to society.\textsuperscript{80}

In an earlier article, he emphasizes the commitment typified by marriage: “the formal commitment of marriage is . . . the basis of stable expectations in personal relationships. The willingness to marry permits important legal and personal assumptions to arise about one’s

\textsuperscript{73} See Hafen, \textit{Individualism and Autonomy}, supra note 4, at 25-27. “No-fault” divorce is an example of this shift, according to him. See \textit{id}. For further discussion of the shift to contract, see \textit{infra} notes 86–89.

\textsuperscript{74} See Hafen, \textit{Individualism and Autonomy}, \textit{supra} note 4, at 24-25.

\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Id}. at 24. Third, compulsory relationships “are exclusively antagonistic: master and slave, conqueror and captive,” although the individual with the power in the relationship may deploy ideology masking the power relationship. \textit{Id}. at 24–25.

\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Id}. at 27.

\textsuperscript{77} \textit{Id}. at 37.

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{See id}. at 32.

\textsuperscript{79} Hafen, \textit{Individualism and Autonomy}, supra note 4, at 31.

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{Id}. at 39–41.
intentions." He also contrasts legal marriage with unmarried cohabitation: "legal marriage is more likely than is unmarried cohabitation to encourage such personal willingness to labor and 'invest' in relationships with other people, whether child or adult." He also notes that the range of "legally and socially acceptable" family forms has widened in the twentieth century to include "working mothers, families headed by women, families in which fathers share housework, and families without children." He also posits that "marriage alone plays a critical role in the democratic structure by interposing a significant legal entity between the individual and the state." He hopes that in the future, "family law will find ways to sing more clearly the melody of belonging."

One of the ways in which family and marriage law have become more individual-oriented, as many have observed, is through the gradual move from status to contract. Glendon, Schneider, and

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81 Hafen, Constitutional Status, supra note 4, at 485–86.
82 Id. at 486. Milton Regan takes a similar position. See Regan, supra note 5, at 122–28 (noting that unmarried unions tend to be less stable than married unions and arguing for a clear distinction between married and unmarried status). Mary Becker also contrasts the benefits of marriage with cohabitation. See Mary E. Becker, Family Law in the Secular State and Restrictions on Same-Sex Marriage: Two Are Better than One, 2000 U. ILL. L. REV. (forthcoming 2000) [hereinafter Becker, Two Are Better] (noting the cohabiting couples' relationships tend to be less stable and satisfying to their members than relationships between members of married couples).
83 Hafen, Constitutional Status, supra note 4, at 490.
84 Id. at 483.
85 Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 42.
86 Id. at 25–26, 38; Schneider, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1, at 532–36. Various scholars have voiced concerns about the increased contractualization of family law. See, e.g., Regan, supra note 5, at 2–3, 34–42; Minow, Redefining Families: Who's In and Who's Out, 62 U. COL. L. REV. 269, 282–83 (1991) [hereinafter Minow, Redefining Families]. Craig Christensen notes the difficulty of applying traditional contract principles to intimate relationships. See Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13, at 1327–28. He also concludes that increased use of contracts by same-gender couples will be positive but will not be an adequate substitute for "marriage as a comprehensive arbiter of legally enforceable rights." Id. at 1347. Implicit in his idea, as well as in Regan's, Hafen's, and others', is the idea that marriage is something more than an individually negotiated contract; Regan and others refer to this as a status. There is debate about many aspects of the contractualization of family law. One scholar recently proposed incorporating commercial contract principles into marriage law through a premarital security agreement, pursuant to which the primary homemaker gets a security interest in the primary wage-earner's post-divorce income. See Martha M. Ertman, Commercializing Marriage: A Proposal for Valuing Women's Work Through Premarital Security Agreements, 77 TEX. L. REV. 17 (1998) [hereinafter Ertman, Commercializing Marriage]. Another scholar has argued that the status/contract distinction is simplistic, and that selective enforcement of premarital agreements, pursuant to which financial terms are enforced while non-monetary terms are not enforced, disadvantages women. See Silbaugh, Family Economy, supra note 14. She further argues that premarital agreements
Hafen all find problems with the introduction of a contractual approach to family law. Hafen suggests that people invest less in their family relationships if a contractual approach is used. Glendon notes that prenuptial agreements "are nearly always used to insulate the property of the more powerful spouse, who in most cases will have the better bargaining position." And Schneider concludes that "contract law is primarily seen as a way of relieving people of obligations the laws and social norms have historically embodied."

Glendon and Schneider both discuss how the law of marriage and divorce has developed toward a model that does not recognize dependency or connections between human beings in a constructive way. To them and many others including many feminist scholars, this is a serious shortcoming of modern marriage and family law. Glendon notes that families still provide much non-market care for the helpless (young, old, and disabled), despite the shortage of caregivers. Law should recognize this and yet does not, since it imposes an unrealistic model of autonomy. Family law in the United States should more effectively take account of actual relationships of dependency, for example when there are small children, according to Glendon, should be unenforceable. See id. Still another approach is to challenge the idea that contractualization necessarily is related to atomism and lack of commitment. Robert and Elizabeth Scott argue that "contracts can serve very well as a basis for an enduring, committed relationship. Only two modest assumptions are required: that many individuals entering marriage are motivated to undertake a long-term commitment and wish to secure reciprocal commitments from their partners, and that both parties share the goal of a lasting marriage." Scott, Relational Contract, supra note 1, at 1246. They argue that the core meaning of contract is commitment. See id. at 1246. Even the writers who seem to favor increased "contractualization" of family law, recognize a need for broad principles or defaults such as those created by marriage rules. See Scott, Relational Contract, supra note 1, at 1320-29; Ertman, Commercializing Marriage, supra at 55, 59-60 n.159.

He writes that "when commitments among spouses and children are unqualified, we learn and grow to an extent not possible in self-oriented, limited relationships of contract." Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 39.

Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note 2, at 139. She notes that while marriage contract proponents initially saw such contracts as "the ideal way to preserve the neutrality of the state, promote sex equality and respect individual liberty," in reality the issues are not so simple in view of power dynamics and issues about what should and should not be subject to contract. Id. For expression of similar concerns regarding applying traditional contract principles to intimate relationships, see Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13, at 1327-28.

Schneider, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1, at 592.

See generally Martha Fineman, The Neutered Mother, the Sexual Family, and Other Twentieth Century Tragedies (1995); Minow, Forming Underneath, supra note 5, at 894; Robin West, Jurisprudence and Gender, 55 U. Chi. L. Rev. 1, 1-3 (1988).

See infra notes 127 and 257 for additional scholarship on these points.

See Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note 2, at 306-07.
Schneider, and others. These important observations will be linked with the law concerning same-gender couples in Part III.93

B. Limitations of the Atomism Critique

Glendon, Schneider, and Hafen rightly highlight the dominant trend in the changes in laws over the last fifty years concerning marriage, divorce, and family as moving toward recognizing individuals as individuals, with individual rights.94 For example, "nonfault divorce," to use Glendon's term,95 has made it easier for a spouse to leave a marriage if the spouse is unhappy in the marriage, even if the other spouse does not want the marriage to end.96 Enforcement of premarital agreements concerning property has increased, which allows people to tailor their post-divorce economic arrangements individually.97 Developments such as the abrogation of interspousal tort immunity98 and the availability of protective orders for domestic violence99 recognize members of married couples as individuals in new ways. Glendon and Schneider also acknowledge that people may live their lives in more interconnected and generous ways than law or their own lan-

93 See infra Parts III and IV.


95 GLENDON, TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW, supra note 2, at 188-89.

96 It is not clear precisely what role nonfault or no-fault divorce played in causing the heightened divorce rate from the seventies to the nineties. Naomi Cahn terms no-fault divorce a "contributing factor" but also points out that the divorce rate began rising well before no-fault was introduced and that many factors have contributed to it. See Naomi R. Cahn, Review Essay: The Moral Complexities of Family Law, 50 STAN. L. REV. 225, 249-50 (1997). No-fault divorce and its consequences have spawned a proliferation of literature; for a recent discussion, see Katherine T. Bartlett, Saving the Family from the "formes", 31 U.C. Davis L. REV. 809 (1998).

97 See Silbaugh, Family Economy, supra note 14; Ertman, Commercializing Marriage, supra note 86, at 60 n.159.


guage would indicate. Also, as Hafen notes, many people tend to see permanent commitment as the ideal.

Nonetheless, to some extent, Glendon, Schneider, and Hafen overstate the extent to which marriage has become simply an institution for self-fulfillment. To a large extent, the old non-reciprocal duties of civil marriage have been replaced by matching, reciprocal duties. New family medical leave statutes recognize connections between people that were previously ignored by law. "The story told by law about marriage now is not that it is simply an institution for

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100 See Glendon, Abortion and Divorce, supra note 2, at 141-42; Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note 2, at 312-13; Schneider, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1, at 556-57, 583.

101 See Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 34.

102 See infra notes 108-20 and accompanying text.

103 Family law in the United States, including marriage law, is civil law rather than religious law. Lawrence M. Friedman states "[i]n England, ecclesiastical courts had jurisdiction over marriage and divorce, and the church played an important role in family law. The United States had no such court, and, after the early nineteenth century, no established churches. Family law was thoroughly secular in the United States." Lawrence M. Friedman, A History of American Law 202 (1985).

104 See infra notes 108-20 and accompanying text. Glendon seems to conclude that this is not so. She writes:

[The trend toward withdrawal of regulation of the ongoing marriage in the United States is reinforced by the advance of the equality principle. While equality theoretically can be implemented by extending legal rights and duties connected with marriage to whichever sex previously lacked them, the equality principle more often, in combination with other factors, results in diminished rights and duties for both, draining marriage of much of its legal content and promoting the idea of marriage as an association of separate individuals....

Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note 2, at 95. Despite Glendon's assertion, it seems that generally, duties and rights connected with marriage have been extended to whichever sex previously lacked them, as discussed infra at notes 108-120 and accompanying text. It is not clear exactly what Glendon is referring to when she discusses the "trend towards withdrawal of regulation of the ongoing marriage," since earlier she discussed the longstanding "principle" and practice of "noninterference in private life" that was dominant from the time of John Stewart Mill in common law systems. Id. at 86. She contrasts the continental systems which leave open possible judicial involvement in ongoing marriages, with the United States' "traditional approach of nonintervention." Id. at 94-95. Thus, it is not clear how the advance of the equality principle reinforces the trend toward withdrawal of regulation of the ongoing marriage. While it may be the case that the "other factors" she alludes to result in diminished rights and duties, the legal reforms in marriage seem generally to have extended duties, not contracted them.


106 See Glendon, Abortion and Divorce, supra note 2, at 9.
individual self-fulfillment, but rather that it is an institution based on equality and mutual commitment.\textsuperscript{107}

For example, at common law, the wife owed a duty to provide companionship and services to the husband, but the husband owed no such duty to the wife.\textsuperscript{108} Thus, the husband could sue a third party for loss of her consortium, but she could not sue for loss of his consortium because she had no right to it. The common law and statutes, largely in the 1970s, came to provide that each spouse had a duty to provide services and companionship to the other, so that each spouse could sue for the loss of the other's companionship.\textsuperscript{109} The law could have developed so that neither spouse had a duty to provide such services and companionship to the other, but it did not.

Similarly, at common law and well into this century, the husband owed a duty of support to the wife as long as she lived with him, but she had no duty to support the husband (even if she could do so).\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{107} It can be difficult to determine whether various developments further the trend toward atomization or not. For example, the Louisiana Covenant Marriage Law, LA. REV. STAT. ANN. § 9:307 (West 1997), heralded by some as a return to an earlier era when couples were more unified, actually can be seen as furthering the individualization of family law because it gives individuals and couples the opportunity to choose which set of divorce laws will apply to them should they separate.


\textsuperscript{109} See Paul Benjamin Linton, State Equal Rights Amendments: Making a Difference or Making a Statement?, 70 TEMP. L. REV. 907, 932 (1997) (noting that state courts have consistently held that loss of consortium must be extended to women to avoid violating equal rights guarantees); see, e.g., Rodriguez v. Bethlehem Steel, 525 P.2d 669 (Cal. 1974) (holding wife has loss of consortium action against third party who injured husband); ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 14, § 302 (West 1999) (either spouse may sue for loss of consortium); OHIO REV. CODE ANN. § 2125.02(B) (Anderson 1999) (in wrongful death actions, surviving spouse can sue for loss of consortium).

\textsuperscript{110} See Robert C. Brown, The Duty of the Husband to Support the Wife, 18 VA. L. REV. 823 (1932), reprinted in SELECTED ESSAYS ON FAMILY LAW 810, 822 (American Association of Law Schools eds., 1950); Blanche Crozier, Marital Support, 15 B.U. L. REV. (1935), reprinted in SELECTED ESSAYS ON FAMILY LAW 831 (American Association of Law Schools eds., 1950); see, e.g., Graham v. Graham, 33 F. Supp. 936 (1940) (finding husband and wife can not contract to relieve husband of duty to support wife; contract giving wife obligation to support husband held void). In 1935, Blanche Crozier discussed the possibility of extending the duty of support to the wife, arguing that "[i]t is not possible to extend the duty of support to the wife so long as she is not the owner of her own means of support, her labor . . . . The husband's ownership of the wife's labor is the foundation of his duty of support; and one is as incapable of being made reciprocal as the other." Crozier, Marital Support, supra, at 859.
The duty of support was not absolute. For example, according to a 1932 commentator, "[t]here is no question that a wife who is without justification living apart from her husband is not entitled to support." Now the duty of support extends to both spouses. Under current law, each owes a duty to support the other during the marriage. Some statutes specify that the duty is owed whether or not the spouses are living together. Thus, not only has the duty to support been extended to both spouses, but in some instances it is less conditional than it was in the past. As with the example of consortium, the law could have developed in such a way that neither owed such a duty, but it did not.

One interesting area where a non-reciprocal duty was not extended to both spouses in recent marriage reform is the duty to follow a spouse. It appears that generally under the common law, as long as a husband performed his duty of support, he could determine the wife's place of residence. For example, until it was struck down in 1983, a Louisiana law stated, "The wife is bound to live with her hus-

111 Brown, supra note 110, at 822; see also Steinfield v. Girrard, 68 A. 630 (1907) (finding wife who deserts husband without his fault forfeits right to support from him). The duty of support and companionship was generally not enforceable as long as the marriage was intact. See, e.g., McGuire v. McGuire, 59 N.W.2d 836 (Neb. 1953) (finding wife's claim that husband should be ordered to provide better living situation dismissed since parties were living together). This is still the case. See Margaret M. Mahoney, Economic Sharing During Marriage: Equal Protection, Spousal Support and the Doctrine of Necessities, 22 J. Fam. L. 221, 229 (1983-1984).

112 See Silbaugh, Family Economy, supra note 14, at 84. See generally Mahoney, supra note 111.

113 See, e.g., DEL. CODE ANN. tit. 13, § 502 (1999) (spouse has duty to support spouse); Mich. COMP. LAWS § 401.5 (1999) (husband or wife must provide support); Mont. CODE ANN. § 40-2-102 (1997) (wife and husband have duty to support one another); N.Y. Fam. Ct. Act § 412 (McKinney 1998) (married person has duty to support spouse); Ohio REV. CODE ANN. § 3103.03 (West 1999) (married person must support spouse); Okla. ST. ANN. tit. 43, § 202 (West 2000) (wife must support husband and husband must support wife).


115 The duty, in the past and currently, generally is only enforced by indirect means such as criminal law, the necessities doctrine or family expense statutes which allow creditors to seek recovery from one spouse for goods that the other spouse purchased. See Mahoney, supra note 111, at 229-45.

116 See Brown, supra note 110, at 814, citing Kirk v. Chinstrand, 88 N.W. 422 (Minn. 1901) (finding where husband refuses to permit wife to live with him, he may not dictate where she may live).
band and to follow him wherever he chooses to reside: the husband is obligated to receive her and to furnish her with whatever is required for the convenience of life, in proportion to his means and condition.\footnote{117} The Louisiana Court of Appeals held that the gender-specific requirement that the wife follow the husband was unconstitutional.\footnote{118} Now it appears that neither spouse owes a duty to follow the other.\footnote{119} It needs no citation to assert that many married couples with two wage-earners have difficulty deciding where to live.

Generally, duties within marriage, where practical, have been extended to both spouses. Regarding the duty to follow a spouse, it would not be practical for obvious reasons to extend this to both spouses, and it has not been done. While duties within ongoing marriages are not directly enforceable, this is not new.\footnote{120}

Although both members of the couple now are recognized as individuals by the law, that does not mean that marriage has become simply an institution for individual self-fulfillment.\footnote{121} As Robin West writes, "Marriage just is, through and through, anti-individualistic. That is precisely its moral strength, and no small measure of its immense appeal."\footnote{122} Marriage law for the first time presents men and women with a model of mutual duties owed by each member of the couple to the other. Marriage law has changed from an explicitly patriarchal model where the person who lacked legal identity, and who did not count as an individual, was the wife.\footnote{123}


\footnote{118} See Crosby, 434 So.2d at 163, appeal dismissed per stipulation, 442 So.2d 1248 (La. 1983). This case took place against a backdrop of fault-based divorce laws. In order to obtain alimony, Mrs. Crosby had to show that she was free from fault. The only evidence of her fault was "her refusal to follow Mr. Crosby when he changed domiciles." Id. at 164. The refusal to follow violated La. Civ. Code Ann. art. 120 (West 1999), quoted in the text above.

\footnote{119} See id.

\footnote{120} See Mahoney, supra note 111, at 229-45.

\footnote{121} Milton Regan states, "spouses ... don't simply help each other construct separate individual identities .... [T]hey participate in the creation of a shared ... identity." Regan, supra note 5, at 94.


\footnote{123} See Linda K. Kerber, No Constitutional Right to Be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship (1998) (discussing how in the United States married women's obligations to their families and husbands historically have substituted for their obligations to the state, and how this has changed only gradually); Siegel, Modernization, supra note 108, at 2194. Thus, even the idea of some women having autonomy is relatively new.
As Katharine Baker has stated, "[t]raditionally, family relationships were treated as property relationships, with the husband and father essentially ‘owning’ his wife and children."124 As Baker notes, "[t]he abolition of coverture and the Married Women’s Property Acts helped alleviate some of the more blatantly subordinating effects of marriage for women."125 Nonetheless, as Reva Siegel has explained in detail, the legal system resisted legal reforms aimed at improving wives’ economic status, well into this century.126 While marriage is now an institution of formal equality, various factors lead to continuing concerns about women’s status in marriage.127

Even the idea of women being autonomous individuals is relatively new. While white women and black women historically have been denied individual autonomy (in very different ways), white men’s individual autonomy has been widely encouraged.128 As Baker observes, "the values associated with individualism and autonomy are values that many men may already have, but that women may

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125 Id. at 1530.
127 See, e.g., Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7 (arguing that current marriage rules exacerbate women’s subordinate status); Ertman, Commercializing Marriage, supra note 86, at 17–22, 31 (arguing that devaluation of women’s household labor operates to the detriment of homemakers and all women); Katherine Silbaugh, Turning Labor into Love: Housework and the Law, 103 Nw. U. L. Rev. 1, 6 (1996) [hereinafter Silbaugh, Labor into Love] (arguing that treatment of women’s unpaid household labor disadvantages women).
128 See Baker, supra note 124, at 1549–58. This framework is extremely broad-brush, and applies mainly to white women and men in the United States, and not to all of them, since issues of class, region, religion and so forth complicate matters. It can not be plausibly argued that black men’s or black women’s autonomy was encouraged in the United States under slavery. In view of racist legal structures that have persisted throughout most of the twentieth century, it is difficult to claim that black men’s or black women’s autonomy has at any time been widely encouraged in the same way that some white men’s autonomy has been encouraged. See, e.g., Denise C. Morgan, Jack Johnson: Reluctant Hero of the Black Community, 32 A KRON L. REV. 529 (1999) (stating that a strong sense of individuality has been a punishable offense for black Americans for most of the history of the United States). Gender issues for black women are often very different from gender issues for white women, in family law as in other areas. See, e.g., Twila L. Perry, Alimony: Race, Privilege, and Dependency in the Search for Theory, 82 GEO. L.J. 2481 (1994) (noting married black women may be less economically dependent within marriage than white women and that alimony theory may rest on assumptions more applicable on average to white women than to black women); Jennifer Wiggins, Note: Rape, Racism, and the Law, 6 HARV. WOMEN’S LAW J. 103 (1983) (rape laws and prosecutions historically ignored all rape of black women while taking seriously some rape charges by white women, as long as those charges were against black men).
need." Thus, criticizing the recent individual orientation of family law and marriage has undertones of targeting women's newfound autonomy while accepting without question the autonomy which for many white men has been there all along.

In discussing marriage, Schneider and Hafen tend to give only passing attention to the patterns of gender subordination that were an explicit and integral part of marriage law until recently. For example, while Schneider notes that "historically, spouses were admired for sacrificing themselves for each other," he does not deal with the gender-based disparity of "sacrifice" expected in "traditional" marriage, and appears to assume that the "sacrifice" expected of each spouse was the same or equivalent. It was not.

In short, the changes in the law of marriage over the past fifty years and longer have created an ideal model of matching duty and equality, of commitment between spouses. The changes in marriage law are not just about loosening bonds between people, although there is that aspect. The recent law of marriage presents a model, not just of individual fulfillment or gratification, but of commitment to a truly shared, interdependent life.

129 Baker, supra note 124, at 1556.
130 See id. at 1556. See generally Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96.
131 See Schneider, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1, at 523.
132 See generally Siegel, Modernization, supra note 108, at 2131 (arguing that wives in the industrial era and in the present were economically disempowered by marriage and impoverished by divorce); Siegel, Home as Work, supra note 126 (reviewing efforts to reform doctrines that gave husband title over property notwithstanding wives' labor contributions in pre-Civil War period); supra notes 108-09, 124-27 and accompanying text.
133 See generally Siegel, Modernization, supra note 108, at 2131 (arguing that wives in the industrial era and in the present were economically disempowered by marriage and impoverished by divorce); Siegel, Home as Work, supra note 126 (reviewing efforts to reform doctrines that gave husband title over property notwithstanding wives' labor contributions in pre-Civil War period); supra notes 108-09, 124-27 and accompanying text. For a similar argument extending beyond marriage to family law generally, see generally Cahn, Review Essay: The Moral Complexities of Family Law, supra note 96.
134 See supra notes 95-97 and accompanying text. Of course, not all loosening of bonds between people is negative. For example, few would argue for a return to the days when domestic violence was protected by the mantle of family privacy and the husband-wife bond. Moreover, it may be that individual autonomy can be a foundation for genuine community. Katherine Bartlett explicitly makes this link, claiming that "robust notions of the community and family depend" on "diversity and notions of individual freedom." Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 818.
C. The Decline of Moral Discourse Critique

Another related theme in the work of these scholars is that moral discourse in family law has declined and that family law has become separated from moral concerns. Schneider's important 1985 article, *Moral Discourse and the Transformation of Family Law*¹³⁶ argues that there is a powerful "tendency toward diminished moral discourse and transferred moral responsibility in family law."¹³⁷ He believes that this thesis is supported by no-fault divorce laws,¹³⁸ by child custody laws where custody is no longer supposed to be awarded on the basis of a parent's sexual behavior,¹³⁹ by increased enforcement of interspousal contracts,¹⁴⁰ and by other legal phenomena.¹⁴¹ The shift in his view was related to a number of factors; to a large extent, he believes, moral discourse has been replaced by psychological discourse.¹⁴² Schneider later writes, "for some people and in some ways, morals—and thus moral discourse—has become a diminished and disfavored category not just in law, but in life, and . . . this change has helped impel the law away from moral discourse."¹⁴³ Schneider also notes an increased skepticism toward rules and broad principles and a professed, al-

¹³⁷ Id. at 1809. He states that there has been "a diminution of the law's discourse in moral terms about the relations between family members, and the transfer of many moral decisions from the law to the people the law once regulated." Id. at 1807-08.
¹³⁸ See id. at 1810-11.
¹³⁹ See id. at 1811.
¹⁴¹ See id. at 1814-16.
¹⁴² See id. The factors to which he attributes the changes are the legal tradition of non-interference in family matters, the ideology of liberal individualism, American society's changing moral beliefs, and the rise of "psychologic man." See id. at 1808-09.
¹⁴³ Schneider, *Marriage and Morals,* supra note 1, at 519. Schneider notes that for many, the term "morality" has come to have a narrow meaning, referring to traditional sexual morality. See id. at 537-38. He notes that:

the term "moral" has in some milieux taken on a narrow—and derogatory—meaning. "Morality" means "traditional morality" which means sexual morality. The relegation of morals to sexual morals does little to advance the dignity of moral thought, for sexual morals have come to connote a narrow, rigid, prudish, restrictive, and repressive regime of outdated ideas hypocritically stated and heartlessly imposed . . . . In short, moral has come to mean moralistic.

*Id.*
though incomplete, moral relativism in students such that they are unwilling to make moral judgments about family matters openly.144

Glendon notes that in the United States, "secular family . . . law substantially refrains from articulating a common morality."145 Glendon claims that family law:

[H]as been influenced by new ideas, not about families, but about law and morality. Such ideas include the problematic notions that courts and legislatures should not attempt to impose "values" (except for equality, individual liberty and tolerance). . . . The result is often that other normative legal propositions have tended to be phased out, even when they are quite widely shared.146

Hafen also seems to support the idea that moral discourse has declined.147 He notes that "the legal system is generally less confident about the normative posture of many former notions of morality and ideal behavior, even in the context of criminal law."148 Without being very specific,149 these authors convey an impression of some nostalgia for the passed time when the rules were clearer and the legal system was more confident about rules and morality.150

144 See id. at 543. In his article, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1, Schneider uses the example of the reaction of his family law students to a hypothetical of a man wanting to leave his wife of many years for his young secretary to make various points. These points include the idea that students view marriage as primarily a vehicle for self-fulfillment, since few articulated any moral objections to the man leaving his marriage, and few articulated any moral reasons why he should continue to support his spouse after marriage. See id. at 509-17. By contrast, in teaching family law at University of Maine School of Law, I have found students articulate the opposite thoughts; that after a certain time a relationship (married or unmarried, gay or straight) carries with it an obligation to stay, divide property not according to title, and/or to provide ongoing support of some kind.

145 Glendon, TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW, supra note 2, at 14.

146 Id. at 297.

147 See Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 1-3.

148 Id. at 5.

149 Margaret Brinig notes that "much of the communitarian literature . . . sets a mood rather than providing an agenda." Margaret F. Brinig, Status, Contract and Covenant, 79 CORNELL L. REV. 1573, 1573 (1994) (reviewing MILTON REGAN, FAMILY LAW AND THE PURSUIT OF INTIMACY (1993)).

150 See, e.g., Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 1-18. See generally Schneider, Marriage and Morals, supra note 1; Glendon, Abortion and Divorce, supra note 2, at 112-42.
D. Limitations of the Decline in Moral Discourse Critique

Glendon, Schneider, and Hafen are correct that courts "are now less likely to rely on moralistic language or moral judgments in the entire range of family law issues, from divorce to child custody to child neglect,"\(^{151}\) and in that sense moral discourse certainly has declined. This does not mean, however, that moral concerns have been exiled from family law.\(^{152}\) Instead, moral values different from those that grounded family law in the fault divorce era increasingly animate family law.\(^{153}\) These "moral values are grounded in equality, fairness, commitment, and nurturance"\(^{154}\) and are explored in recent scholarship, discussed in this section.

For example, some recent developments in family law, such as the societal recognition of domestic violence and the jettisoning of archaic rules that discriminated against women, can be seen as based on moral values that view violence within families and discrimination against women as wrong. As Naomi Cahn writes in an instructive review essay, "claims [about the decline of moral discourse] fail to recognize the 'moral values' underlying [recent] changes in family law."\(^{155}\)

Cahn identifies a "new Family Morality" which "addresses family values, promotes acceptance of broader definitions of the family, and draws on notions of fairness and equality."\(^{156}\) Cahn argues that:

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151 Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 5. Compare In re Black, 283 P.2d 887 (Utah 1955) (upholding termination of parental rights of polygamous parents because of immorality of polygamous environment for children), with Sanderson v. Tryon, 739 P.2d 623 (Utah 1987) (finding that a parent's practicing polygamy, standing alone, is insufficient to support a custody award to the non-polygamous parent).

152 The broad question of the relationship between law and morality is beyond the scope of this article. Very influential works include Patrick Devlin, The Enforcement of Morals (1965) (claiming that law should be used to uphold society's moral standards in the context of criminal laws forbidding homosexual sex); Herbert A. Hart, Liberty and Morality (1963) (claiming that it is not justified to use criminal law to outlaw conduct simply because that conduct is immoral according to common belief). For a recent argument that although law and morality overlap, moral theory has nothing to offer jurisprudence, see Richard A. Posner, The Problematics of Moral and Legal Theory 91-182 (1999).

153 See Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 816; Cahn, Review Essay: The Moral Complexities of Family Law, supra note 96, at 238; Silbaugh, Family Economy, supra note 14, at 67 n.1.


155 Id. at 244-45. Cahn notes that the decline of moral discourse and concerns over the increased individual focus of family law raise troubling questions and that issues about divorce and children should cause concern. See id.

156 Id. at 245.
[t]he shift away from traditional moral discourse and toward private contracting does not indicate diminished moral discourse in family law; instead, this shift represents only one of the many different trends within family law. The new family morality recognizes that there is, simultaneously, an increase in new types of moral discourse in some of those same areas, as well as the inevitable tension between private contracting and status based assumptions.¹⁵⁷

Katharine Silbaugh, similarly, observes that “moral values in family law have shifted toward equity and away from older moral values, such as marital fault defined as infidelity.”¹⁵⁸ Lee Teitelbaum has argued that the decline in moral discourse seems to follow from the abandonment of “a moral theory to which the use of expressly moralistic language is expressly suited,”¹⁵⁹ but does not reflect “a wholesale abandonment of morality.”¹⁶⁰ He writes of the inadequacy of rights talk in family law, and urges consideration of ways “to talk about families as relationships.”¹⁶¹

Regan takes the position that family law should promote “a substantive moral vision of commitment and responsibility.”¹⁶² Another scholar with strong moral concerns, Martha Minow, emphasizes issues of obligation and moral responsibility.¹⁶³ She discusses duties at length.¹⁶⁴ She endorses a “liberal approach to family membership but a strict view of family obligation.”¹⁶⁵ This scholarship shows that con-

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¹⁵⁷ Id.
¹⁵⁸ Silbaugh, Family Economy, supra note 14, at n. 1. Silbaugh’s article, for example, explicitly “privileges equality . . . over other values, including liberty.”
¹⁶⁰ Id. at 431.
¹⁶¹ Id. at 441. He notes that a “revised teleological view, directed to the functions and characteristics we now value in [family] relationships, may provide one way of thinking about these questions.” Id.
¹⁶² Regan, supra note 5, at 4.
¹⁶³ Minow, All in the Family, supra note 5, at 306.
¹⁶⁴ Id. at 325–32.
¹⁶⁵ Minow, Redefining Families, supra note 86, at 282. Illustrating this principle, she writes: 

[I]f someone claims family membership and the benefits that go along with it, that person may also be said to consent to and accept the obligations that attach to family roles. In other words, let us be welcoming toward those who are willing to take on family obligations, but serious in enforcing the expectation that those obligations will in fact be fulfilled.

Minow, All in the Family, supra note 5, at 307.
cerns with moral issues in family law remain strong, although these concerns often focus on different issues than those considered overriding in the past.

Katharine Bartlett acknowledges problems and challenges faced by families and articulates a “family-enabling model of reform,” but avoids using moral terminology. She writes:

Family law is soaked in moral judgments that both reinforce the law and are reinforced by it. At some level, the question is not whether family law should reflect moral principles but what those principles will be. When it comes to the moral principles the state should be trying to reinforce, I favor respect or moral accommodation for a broad range of family forms that are capable of providing nurturing environments to its members.

She states that “[i]n today’s debates over the family, however, speaking in broad moral terms is too readily associated with one set of specific, conservative values to the exclusion of other values.” Since her model accepts a wide range of family types, she “usually find[s] moral terminology more confusing than helpful and [tries] to avoid it.” She argues that strengthening two-parent families is a valid policy goal since such families tend to be better for children, but that family-standardizing reform proposals such as proposals to restrict grounds for divorce are likely to have negative consequences for women and children.

Family law issues, like other legal issues, relate to moral questions. Family law’s moral discourse has diminished in some respects and in some contexts. But in important ways, the moral concerns of family law have not simply declined but rather have shifted to concerns with fairness, equality, commitment and nurturing.

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166 Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 843.
167 Id. at 816.
168 Id.
169 Id.
170 See id. at 819–43.
171 See supra notes 155–170 and accompanying text.
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III. THE EXCLUSION OF LESBIAN AND GAY MALE COUPLES FROM CIVIL MARRIAGE

Many lesbians and gay men are in long-term, committed couple relationships\(^{172}\) and many would marry if they were not prohibited from doing so.\(^{173}\) Information from surveys of unmarried partners has shown that about 1.7 million unmarried households “are likely to be headed by same-sex couples.”\(^{174}\) Lesbian and gay male couples in the United States have been trying to obtain recognition of their unions as legal marriages for over twenty-five years.\(^{175}\) Some courts in recent years have shown increased receptivity to such claims.\(^{176}\) Most notably,


\(^{173}\) See Eskridge, supra note 7, at 1–4; Chambers, supra note 172, at 450 n.7; Christensen, *If Not Marriage*, supra note 172, at 1726 n.162–63. Not all lesbians and gay men see marriage as an ideal model and some define family in different ways. See Christensen, *Legal Ordering*, supra note 13, at 1304; see, e.g., Darren L. Hutchinson, *Out Yet Unseen: A Racial Critique of Gay and Lesbian Legal Theory and Political Discourse*, 29 Conn. L. Rev. 561, 591–601 (1997) (arguing that securing legal marriage for gay male and lesbian couples is a questionable goal).


\(^{175}\) See, e.g., Baker v. Nelson, 191 N.W.2d 185 (Minn. 1971) (stating that marriage by same-gender couples is not marriage).

\(^{176}\) See Brouse v. Bureau of Vital Stats., No. 3AN–95–0562 CI, 1998 WL 88743 (Alaska Super. Ct. Feb. 27, 1998) (holding that because the right to choose one’s life partner is fundamental, a ban on marriage by couples of the same gender must be justified by a compelling state interest in order to be constitutional under the state constitution); Baehr v. Miike, Civ. No. 91–1394, 1996 WL 694235 (Haw. Cir. Ct. Dec. 3, 1996), rev’d and remanded, 994 P.2d 566 (Haw. Dec. 9, 1999) (Hawaii trial judge holds state can not forbid marriage by same-gender couples). In earlier proceedings in the same case, a plurality of the Hawaii Supreme Court had held that the state’s ban on marriage by same-gender couples had to be justified by a compelling state interest in order to be constitutional. See Baehr v. Lewin, 852 P.2d 44, 67 (Haw. 1993), modified by 852 P.2d 74 (Haw. 1993). In November 1998, Alaska voters amended the state constitution to define marriage as between
the Vermont Supreme Court recently held that under the Vermont constitution, the state could not deny to same-sex couples "the common benefit, protection and security that Vermont law provides opposite-sex married couples." The idea of marriage by same-gender couples has encountered major legislative resistance, with numerous states passing bans on marriage by same-gender couples in the past five years. This section does not review the territory of whether such statutes are constitutional. It instead examines the significance of the exclusion from marriage and argues that marriage of same-gender couples can foster positive connections between people and should be allowed.


177 See Appendix: State Anti Same-Sex Marriage Statutes, 16 Quinipiac L. Rev. 134 (1996). Also, although marriage is an area traditionally reserved to the states, Congress in 1997 passed the Defense of Marriage Act, Pub. L. No. 104-199, 110 Stat. 2419, codified at 1 U.S.C. § 728, 28 U.S.C. § 1738C which for the first time created a federal definition of marriage. Some of the states' anti-same-gender marriage statutes have been used as authority to deny other types of connections between gay couples. For example, Arizona's ban was used by the State Department of Corrections to justify forbidding any gay prisoner from holding hands with, hugging or kissing his or her partner at the beginning or end of a prison visit, although heterosexual couples were allowed such physical contact. See infra notes 207-12 and accompanying text. Pennsylvania's law was authority for a court's conclusion that two women could not adopt the biological child born to one of them. In re Adoption of R.B.F. and R.C.F. (Ct. of Common Pleas of Lancaster County, Pa. Oct. 22, 1998) (order dismissing adoption petition with prejudice).

178 For arguments that such statutes are unconstitutional, see sources cited at supra note 7; see also Samuel A. Marcosson, Romer and the Limits of Legitimacy: Stripping Opponents of Gay and Lesbian Rights of their "First Line of Defense" in the Same-Sex Marriage Fight, 24 J. Contemp. L. 217 (1998).

179 In arguing that marriage by same-gender couples be allowed, I am not arguing that such marriage will solve all or almost all problems faced by gay men and lesbians. As Darren Hutchinson has pointed out, for black and Latino lesbians and gay men, marriage may not make much, or any, difference. See Hutchinson, supra note 173, at 591. Hutchinson argues: "Because most gays and lesbians of color remain invisible and marginalized within the larger gay and lesbian community, it is extremely unlikely that a marriage license will close much of the gap between them and the center of a heterosexual society that is stratified by race, class, gender, and sexuality." Id. at 591. Accepting these assertions, however, does not make the denial of marriage to same-gender couples acceptable. Hutchinson also points out that "substantial sociological, historical, and anthropological research demonstrates that African-American blacks, and other non-white cultures place tremendous importance on 'extended families,' rather than rigid nuclear bodies, as a means of social organization and child-rearing. These patterns result from economic necessity and cultural practice." Id. at 592. Assuming that this expansive generalization is supported, it is clear that in the United States' legal system today, marriage nonetheless plays quite an important role. See Glendon, Transformation of Family Law, supra note
A. The Expressive Function—The Story Told by Law

The "story told by law" about lesbian and gay couples, committed relationships by the exclusion from marriage is that they do not exist or do not count. Law tells all people that lesbians and gay men are lone individuals despite the fact that they have "familistic" relations. The exclusion from marriage is thus also significant. Hutchinson further writes, "if gay marriage does not challenge racial, class, and gender inequality, then we should—in light of the 'multilayered and synergistic' nature of sexual subordination—continue to question its high priority and even legitimacy, as an instrument of gay and lesbian liberation." Hutchinson, supra note 173, at 601. As discussed infra, marriage by same-sex couples may challenge gender inequality. See infra notes 308, 315-16 and accompanying text. I agree that marriage by same-gender couples does not, in and of itself, challenge class or racial inequality. Few legal reforms challenge all these forms of inequality simultaneously, but that does not mean none should be pursued. Access to marriage nonetheless is important, despite the acknowledgment that it is not a panacea for inequality of various kinds, for several reasons including the following: First, marriage recognizes important connections between people. As Robin West says, "marriage just is, through and through, anti-individualistic. That is precisely its moral strength, and to no small measure the source of its immense appeal." West, Universalism, supra note 122, at 729.

Second, the exclusion has negative practical consequences for many gay men and lesbians whatever their race or class. For example, the Family and Medical Leave Act does not require employers to provide leave so that an employee can care for his or her partner, only for a spouse or child. See infra note 241 and accompanying text. Third, the exclusion tells false stories about gay male and lesbian couples in committed relationships. Fourth, it stigmatizes all gay men and lesbians. This is not to claim that there are no more severe forms of stigma, or that all gay men and lesbians face only that stigma. Of course, racism may be a more severe form of stigma for African-American gay men and lesbians than the exclusion from marriage. Last, the exclusion is a denial of formal equality.

181 GLENDON, ABORTION AND DIVORCE, supra note 2, at 9.

182 The exclusion from marriage is an important exclusion. Although the legal significance of marriage has diminished, see Mary Ann Glendon, Marriage and the State: The Withering Away of Marriage, 62 VA. L. REV. 663, 681 (1976), our law remains quite marriage-centered. See GLENDON, TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW, supra note 2, at 293-94.

183 Marriage has great practical significance and also has symbolic significance. See Christensen, If Not Marriage, supra note 172, at 1746, 1783; Chambers, What if?, supra note 172, at 449. Marriage law involves a panoply of legal protections and burdens. See generally Chambers, supra note 172. A federal study by the General Accounting Office found 1040 federal statutes under which marital or spousal status affects an entitlement, right or obligation. Rep. No. GAO/OGC 97-16, 1997 WL 67783 (Jan. 31, 1997). See also Fellows et al., Committed Partners and Inheritance, supra note 174; Matthew R. Dubois, Legal Planning for Gay, Lesbian and Non-Traditional Elders, 63 ALBANY L. REV. 263 (2000).

184 Mary Ann Case has shown how in litigation of lesbian and gay issues other than marriage cases, couples are usually absent. See Mary Ann Case, Couples and Coupling in the Public Sphere: A Comment on the Legal History of Litigating for Lesbian and Gay Rights, 79 VA. L. REV. 1643 (1993). She also highlights cases where an individual employee is in a same-gender couple and open about it, and that fact is used against the employee. For a recent example, see Shahar v. Bowers, 114 F.3d 1097 (11th Cir. 1997) (en banc) (upholding state attorney general's decision to rescind job offer to female employee for participating in a wedding ceremony with another woman). She points out that in the few cases where courts
tionships. This story is both false and stigmatizing. The coupled, committed relationships of lesbians and gay men are, as noted above, "outside the law." When such relationships end, through death or breakup, it is as though they never existed. While the law is not uniform, there are few exceptions to this principle. The intersubjectivity of lesbian and gay male couples is unrecognized, no matter how long they have been together. Their interdependence, or the dependence of one on another for health or other reasons, generally is ignored. Since marriage is the quintessential, legally recognized way for two adults to "belong" to one another, refusing to recognize committed, coupled gay relationships consigns the members of such relationships to the impossibility of that kind of "belonging." It thus prevents gay couples from attaining what benefits may come from such belonging and also deprives society of the benefits that may come from belonging. As Hafen claims, without "belonging, we may

have been able to recognize and accept a lesbian or gay couple, one of the partners is either dead, see Braschi v. Stahl Assoc. Co., 544 N.Y.S.2d 784 (1989) (surviving partner of deceased tenant is "family member" within meaning of rent control statute), or seriously disabled, see In re Guardianship of Kowalski, 478 N.W.2d 790 (Minn. 1991), discussed infra at text accompanying notes 190-200. Cheshire Calhoun aptly has observed that an important subtext in debates about treatment of lesbian and gay male couples is the powerful but false notion that gay men and lesbians are incapable of romantic love and commitment. See Cheshire Calhoun, Making Up Emotional People: The Case of Romantic Love, in THE PASSIONS OF LAW 3, 24 (Susan Mules, ed.) (forthcoming 1999). Law generally reflects this. The notion that gay men and lesbians are incapable of romantic love is the flip-side of the also incorrect notion that gay men and lesbians are defined by sexual activity, which is discussed further at Part IV.C.

185 See Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 23.

186 See Calhoun, supra note 184 (highlighting stigmatizing conception of gay men and lesbians as possessing an excessive and unregulated sexuality and psychological inability to maintain stable relationships); Wriggins, Questions of Constitutionality, supra note 7, at 394-96 (arguing that exclusion of an entire group from marriage makes a negative statement about the group and that wholesale exclusion of gay men and lesbians from the institution, contrasted with the relaxed treatment of entry into marriage by heterosexuals, is stigmatizing). I am not claiming that the only valid form of relationship is a marriage-like relationship. A long-term, committed, marital relationship, however, can be a very important, challenging and satisfying part of life which brings benefits to the individuals involved, as well as society. See, e.g., Eskridge, supra note 7, at 109-11; Ball, supra note 7, at 1938; Brinig, supra note 149, at 1600.

187 See Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13, at 1300-01.

188 See, e.g., Adoption of Tammy, 416 Mass. 205, 207 (1993) (adoption by two women of biological child of one of the women allowed); In re Guardianship of Kowalski, 478 N.W.2d 790 (Minn. 1991) (lesbian may be guardian of her severely injured and disabled partner despite objections of injured person's parents); Braschi v. Stahl Assoc. Co., 544 N.Y.S.2d 784 (1989) (holding that under New York rent control statute, long-term gay partner of deceased tenant was a "family member").

189 See Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 32.
never know . . . the reservoirs of strength and compassion we carry within ourselves. That is a loss not only to ourselves, but a major loss to society.” While family law, as Glendon points out, in its focus on individuals unfortunately often ignores actual intersubjectivity and interdependence, this is even more true with regard to gay people.

"Familistic relationships," in work quoted by Hafen, "involve an intermingled and organic unity in which shared commitments of mutual attachment transcend self-interest. Such interaction derives from an unlimited personal commitment, not merely to another person but to the good of the relationship or the family entity as a larger order." This form of relationship, with "commitments of mutual attachment [that] transcend self-interest," is not limited to heterosexual couples. Yet law generally ignores support, dependency, commitments, and "familistic behavior" between members of same-gender couples, as the following examples suggest.

The facts of In re Guardianship of Sharon Kowalski, provide an excellent illustration. At the age of 27, Sharon Kowalski suffered severe brain injuries in a car accident. As a result of the accident, she needed to use a wheelchair for transportation and her memory and ability to speak were impaired. At the time of the accident, she had been living, as a couple, with her lesbian partner, Karen Thompson, for four years. They had exchanged rings and named each other as beneficiaries on their insurance policies, but Sharon's parents were not aware of Sharon's lesbian relationship. After the accident, a dispute began concerning guardianship of Sharon between Sharon's parents and Karen. Eventually, in 1991, eight years after Sharon's car accident, Karen was appointed Sharon's

190 Id. at 38-40.
191 See GLENDON, TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW, supra note 2, at 297.
192 Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 23.
193 See REGAN, supra note 5, at 120 (moral aspiration of marriage is cultivation of a relational sense of identity not necessarily heterosexual intimacy); Ball, supra note 7, at 1936-42 (same-sex relationships are morally good and provide means for gay and lesbian people to connect with one another and achieve autonomy); Brinig, supra note 149, at 1600 (same-sex couples "can make the permanent commitment and exhibit the selfless loving and giving required for a covenant"); Michael Perry, The Morality of Homosexual Conduct: A Response to John Finnis, 9 NOTRE DAME J. L. ETHICS & PUB. POL'Y 41, 55(1995) (both heterosexual and homosexual relationships can be lifelong, monogamous, faithful, and loving).
194 See 478 N.W.2d 790 (Minn. 1991).
195 See id.
196 See id.
197 See id.
198 See id. at 791-92.
guardian. Karen Thompson's continuing devotion to her disabled partner took many forms. Karen actively worked with Sharon three or more days a week on Sharon's therapy and daily skills. Karen was the only person willing to care for Sharon outside an institution, and she built a completely handicap-accessible home in the hope that Sharon could live there.\footnote{See Guardianship of Sharon Kowalski, 478 N.W.2d at 793.} Karen was the person best able to motivate Sharon with her therapy.\footnote{See id. at 793–94.} The nitty-gritty details are striking. Karen was often "the only one who can clean Sharon's mouth and teeth, since Sharon is apparently highly sensitive to invasion of her mouth."\footnote{See id. at 794. The court went on to write that: "Oral hygiene is crucial to prevent recurrence of a mouth fungus which can contribute to pain and tooth loss, further inhibiting Sharon's communication skills and her ability to eat solid foods." Id.} By contrast, none of Sharon's biological relatives could care for Sharon outside an institution.\footnote{See id. at 795.} The actions taken by Karen Thompson with respect to her partner demonstrate the existence of a "familistic" relationship. Paraphrasing Hafen, through the mutually belonging relationship between Karen and Sharon, Karen apparently found "reservoirs of strength and compassion" within herself that she might not have known she had; society as well as Sharon have benefited.\footnote{See Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 30. While the ultimate outcome was positive for Karen and Sharon, it took eight years to achieve. Had they been married, Karen's appropriateness as a guardian would have been assumed.}

The situation of the couples in Vermont who are seeking to marry also reflects devotion and commitment. For example, Lois Farnham and Holly Puterbaugh, two of the plaintiffs in\footnote{1999 MIL 1211709 (Dec. 20, 1999).} Baker v. Vermont,\footnote{Id.} have been together as a couple for more than twenty-five years.\footnote{Leah Gardner, Courting the Right to Marry, Vt. TIMES, Aug. 20, 1997 at 7.} Stan Baker and his partner Peter Harrigan, also plaintiffs in Baker v. Vermont, have been together as a couple for over four years.\footnote{Id. Regan also gives various examples of the commitments and bonds of gay male and lesbian couples. See REGAN, supra note 5, at 120–21. Other examples abound. See e.g., ESKRIDGE, supra note 7, at 5–10.}

An example of the state's refusal to recognize any kind of connections between gay people is the Arizona Department of Corrections policy on contact between relatives during prison visitation.\footnote{Stephanie Innes, Prison's Ban on Gay Contact Visits Challenged, TUCSON CITIZEN, Sept. 15, 1997 available in 1997 WL 11147718.} It allows for a "brief period of kissing and embracing for relatives and immediate family at the start and end of each visit," but forbids such...
contact between same-sex partners. When the policy was questioned, the Arizona Director of Corrections justified it based on the state’s ban on same-sex marriages and a statute promoting strong families and family values. The Director wrote that “any policy condoning homosexual activity at visitation, amid families and children, would be contrary to state law.” The Director also wrote that “the Department recognizes the emotional hardships associated with having a loved one incarcerated and the impact imprisonment has on a family. Consequently, the Department allows limited contact between relatives during visitation.” However, to allow gay couples to hug or kiss goodbye would be to “condone homosexual activity.” The story told by the state is that it is not an emotional hardship for a gay or lesbian non-incarcerated person to have his or her loved one incarcerated if the loved one is of the same gender. The state sees the prisoner as neither a “loved one” nor a relative, so the relationship simply does not count.

In re Estate of Hall is an instructive example of law refusing to recognize commitment and dependence. Hall and petitioner went through a private marriage ceremony. They commingled their funds. “They were dependent on each other for the maintenance and upkeep of their home as well as daily living expenses and necessities of life.” Their financial obligations “also included the financial support of Hall’s sister and Hall’s minor son.” When Hall died intestate, petitioner unsuccessfully sought a surviving spouse share under Illinois law. The holding denying relief to petitioner is less important than the facts—deep commitment demonstrated by a private marriage, dependence, financial support of each other and of others.

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208 See Letter from Terry L. Stewart, Director, Arizona Department of Corrections, to Arizona House Representative Ken Cheuvront (Aug. 8, 1997) (on file with the author).
209 Id.
210 Id.
211 Id.
212 Also it is revealing that the Department considers hugging and kissing between gay people to be “homosexual activity,” when it seems not to consider such activities between heterosexuals to be “heterosexual activity.” See infra notes 377–87 and accompanying text.
213 See 707 N.E.2d 201 (Ill. 1998).
214 Id. at 203.
215 Id.
216 Many other examples could be listed. In Rovira v. AT&T, Sandra Rovira and her partner Marjorie Forlini had a private wedding ceremony and pooled their financial resources. 817 F. Supp. 1062, at 1064 (S.D.N.Y. 1993). Rovira’s children from a prior marriage lived with Rovira and Forlini for ten years. Forlini died of cancer after the couple had been together for twelve years. See id. After Forlini died, Rovira and Forlini’s children applied for Sickness Death Benefits from Forlini’s employer, AT&T, which were denied by
“Familistic” relationships and relationships of mutual dependence and support between coupled adults are good for society, as well as the members of the relationship, and should be recognized and supported by law. It is not as if every long-term committed same-gender relationship necessarily involves “shared commitments of mutual attachment [that] transcend self-interest.” Nor does every marriage. Many same-gender relationships, however, have these qualities. The story told by the law that such relationships do not exist is not true and leaves the law at a dangerous disconnect from people’s lives. It also stigmatizes gay and lesbian people.

The story of non-existence told by law has immense practical implications for gay and lesbian couples, discussed in more detail in Parts III.B and C below. The absence of the legal ordering provided by marriage (and divorce) means that lesbian and gay male couples can not rely on the default mechanisms of marriage to order their lives. They live their lives as most couples do, having various under-

AT&T. The decision to deny benefits was upheld by the court. See id. In yet another example, Sherry Barone and Cynthia Friedman had been partners for thirteen years when Friedman found out she had cancer. They signed powers of attorney, wills, health care directives, written instructions to carry out wishes, and so on, to ensure that Barone would have control over, among other things, Friedman’s burial. Yet, once Friedman died, the cemetery refused to allow the inscription she had wanted, “Beloved life partner, daughter, granddaughter, sister, and aunt.” Barone had to sue in order to get the cemetery to follow her instructions, and after a year, the cemetery relented. GRAFF, supra note 55 at 48. In Adams v. Howerton, two men, one of whom was Australian and one of whom was a U.S. citizen, privately married and subsequently sought to have the Australian declared an “immediate relative,” so he could permanently reside in this country. See 486 F. Supp. 1119, 1120 (C.D.Cal. 1980), aff’d, 673 F.2d 1036, 1038 (9th Cir. 1982), cert. den., 458 U.S. 1111 (1982). Yet the INS declared, and a federal district court affirmed, that the Australian was not an immediate relative of the American, so that regardless of the bond between them the Australian would not be entitled to permanent residence status. See id. In Coon v. Joseph, a California court held that a plaintiff who had witnessed his partner being assaulted could not claim negligent infliction of emotional distress since he did not meet the “close relationship” test required to state a claim. See 192 Cal. App. 3d 1269 (1987).

217 Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 23.

218 See Perry, Morality of Homosexual Conduct, supra note 193, at 56. Marriage does not require that partners have particular financial or living arrangements, nor does marriage law require the capacity for “familistic behavior” as a condition for entry into the institution.

219 See supra notes 196-216 and accompanying text.

220 As Martha Minow states, “unless we start to make family law connect with how people really live, the law is either largely irrelevant or merely ideology: merely statements of the kinds of human arrangements the lawmakers do and do not endorse.” Minow, Redefining Families, supra note 86, at 271.

221 See supra note 184.

222 These include intestacy laws, spouse’s elective share laws, community property laws, laws providing for equitable distribution of marital property and alimony at divorce, and a
standings that may change over time but no written contracts, expecting never to become disabled, or break up, and not planning for death. If one partner dies without a will, this results in the application of state intestacy laws, which do not recognize same-gender partners. If one partner becomes disabled and needs a guardian, the other partner will not necessarily be recognized as a guardian. If such a couple breaks up and a member or members of the couple has property, legal confusion can result about who owns what. Disputes between ex-partners may result in painfully intrusive, expensive, time-consuming, and unpredictable litigation. Both Glendon and Schneider have noted the invasive, unpredictable, and unsatisfactory character of the Marvin v. Marvin litigation for unmarried heterosexual couples; the same problems arise for gay male and lesbian couples.

The story law should be telling is that coupled relationships between adults of the same gender involving "shared commitments of mutual attachment [that] transcend self-interest" are civil marriages wide variety of other provisions. See Chambers, What if supra note 172; Christensen, If Not Marriage, supra note 172; Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13. These provisions not only reflect the expressive function, but also the protective function, because they are in part aimed at protecting the economically weaker party from disadvantage caused by the other's actions. For example, laws providing for equitable distribution of property are aimed at dividing property in a fair manner, regardless of which party has title. See Martha M. Ertman, Contractual Purgatory for Sexual Minorities: Not Heaven but Not Hell Either, 73 DENV. U. L. REV. 1107, 1141 (1996) [hereinafter Ertman, Contractual Purgatory]. See Fellows et al., supra note 174, at 2. Efforts to inherit through intestacy laws are unavailing. See In re Estate of Hall, 707 N.E.2d 701 (1998) (discussed at text accompanying notes 213-16). See Guardianship of Sharon Kowalski, 478 N.W.2d 790 (Minn. 1991), discussed at text accompanying notes 194-216. By mentioning property disputes, it is not to be inferred that all lesbians and gay men are affluent. According to research by Professor Lee Badgett, "lesbians and gay men earn no more than heterosexual people; indeed, in some cases gay men appear to earn less than comparable heterosexual men." M.V. Lee Badgett, Income Inflation: The Myth of Affluence Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Americans, 2 NATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN TASK FORCE POLICY INSTITUTE (1998) (visited Feb. 2, 2000) <http://www.ngltf.org/pub>.


See supra notes 45-46.

Hafy, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 23.
if the members of the couple choose to make them so. Concerns about the increased contractualization or individual orientation of family law, and about individuals making only limited investments in relationships, should lead to support of marriage by same-gender couples. Law should encourage members of married couples to be responsible for one another and for their dependents. Marriage, whether between opposite-gender or same-gender couples, opposes atomism and recognizes positive, beneficial connections between members of a couple. This is a very good thing, especially in a society in which people (as Glendon, Schneider, Hafen, and others warn), may be becoming increasingly self-oriented, less generous and less connected to one another.

Legally recognized civil marriage is the most practical boundary or shorthand for this goal of expressing a shared commitment, because as Hafen notes, "a boundary based on the degree of commitment to a relationship or individuals' expectations regarding a relationship's permanence would require intolerable inquiries into the most private realm of individuals' lives."

Moreover, in accord with the "new Family Morality" as outlined by Cahn, which is based on moral values of "equity, fairness, commitment and nurturance," the expressive message that law should be sending is that coupled, intimate, same-gender, committed relationships exist and are positive for the individuals involved as well as for society. Allowing such marriage does not require a radical redefinition of the family, but rather simply a fair expansion of those

230 And, of course, provided they meet other requirements of marriage, such as being of age and not already being married. The Vermont Supreme Court's decision in Baker v. Vermont acknowledges that the extension of marriage to same-gender couples is a matter of recognizing commitment and, at a deeper level, commonality between human beings. The court wrote "[t]he extension of the Common Benefits Clause to acknowledge plaintiffs as Vermonters who seek nothing more, nor less, than legal protection and security for their avowed commitment to an intimate and lasting human relationship is simply, when all is said and done, a recognition of our common humanity." Baker v. Vermont, 1999 WL 1211709, at *23.

231 See supra Part II.D; Minow, Redefining Families, supra note 86, at 282 (arguing that law should be flexible regarding entry into families but should enforce family duties).

232 See supra Part II.A; supra note 4. Crucially, nothing about "belonging" is inherently heterosexual.

233 See Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 815–16 (noting that marriage remains an important ideal).

234 Hafen, Constitutional Status, supra note 4, at 487. See Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13, at 1321–22.


236 Id. at 238.
entitled to marry.\textsuperscript{237} As Regan says in support of marriage by same-
gender couples, "the moral aspiration that marriage has expressed is
not heterosexual intimacy per se, but the more general vision of res-
ponsibility based on the cultivation of a relational sense of ident-
yty."\textsuperscript{238}

B. The Facilitative, Protective, and Dispute Resolution Functions

Three of the most important functions of family law are the pro-
tective, facilitative, and dispute resolution functions.\textsuperscript{239} By excluding
gay people from marriage, the law performs these functions less effec-
tively than if lesbian and gay male couples were allowed to marry.

The facilitative function "help[s] people organize their lives and
affairs in the ways they prefer."\textsuperscript{240} Many of the laws concerning mar-
riage perform a facilitative function.\textsuperscript{241} These range widely. For ex-
ample, the Family and Medical Leave Act requires employers to offer
unpaid leave of up to twelve weeks annually to a qualified employee to
care for a spouse with a serious health problem.\textsuperscript{242} Leave is also al-
lowed for an employee to care for parents and children but not for
anyone else. Taxation provisions allow spouses to transfer property
between themselves without subjecting them to gift tax.\textsuperscript{243} These types
of provisions facilitate couples' financial and personal bonds, encour-
aging mutual care, dependence, and support. Lesbian and gay male
couples are left out of these facilitative provisions.

\textsuperscript{237} Indeed, one need not embrace the entire "new Family Morality" outlined by Cahn
in order to recognize marriage by same-gender couples.

\textsuperscript{238} \textit{REGAN, supra} note 5, at 120.

\textsuperscript{239} \textit{Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra} note 1, at 497, 505-06.

\textsuperscript{240} \textit{Id.} at 497.

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Chambers, What if?, supra} note 172, at 485. Many elements of law have overlapping
functions. For example, the Family and Medical Leave Act, 29 U.S.C. §§ 2611,
2612(a)(1)(c) (1994), has a facilitative function in that it helps employees care for sick
relatives without losing their jobs. It also has an expressive function, in the limitations it
sets on who can care for whom; part of its expressive message is that gay couples' relations-
ships do not count.

\textsuperscript{242} See 29 U.S.C. §§ 2611, 2612(a)(1)(c).

\textsuperscript{243} To take a concrete example, if a gay person owns a house, then falls in love with
someone, the partner moves into the house, and the homeowner puts the house in joint
tenancy to reflect the couple's closeness and financial intertwinedness, this could be a
taxable gift by the original homeowner to the new joint tenant. See 26 U.S.C. § 2503
(1994). On the same facts, if the couple consisted of opposite sex partners, they got mar-
rried and the homeowner put the house in joint tenancy, this would not be a taxable gift.
The gay person's situation is treated the same as if a person owns a house, and puts a
But the facilitative function, for Schneider, also is concerned with individual ordering. As Schneider notes, law’s facilitative function “offer[s] people the law’s services in entering and enforcing contracts, by giving legal effect to their private arrangements.”

Given the exclusion from marriage, gay male and lesbian couples can attempt to order their material arrangements through individual devices such as wills or written contracts and try to rely on family law’s facilitative function in enforcing contracts and giving effect to intentions. Certainly a will is a good idea, but many people cannot afford the usual legal fees, and wills are sometimes challenged by family members. Contracts between members of gay couples may or may not be enforceable. Moreover, as Craig Christensen has shown, the panoply of legal responsibilities and benefits afforded by marriage cannot be constructed from individuals’ contracts.

In addition, as Hafen, Schneider, Glendon, and others have argued, the move to contract in family law is not an unmitigated good. Ordering intimate relationships through bargained-for contracts may protect the more powerful person and encourage the

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244 Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 497.
245 Graff, supra note 55, at 49.
246 See Christensen, If Not Marriage, supra note 172, at 1733 n.213; Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13, at 1341, 1344–1347; Ertman, Contractual Purgatory, supra note 223, at 1198. Ertman notes that it seems that “the best way to maximize the likelihood of judicial enforcement of gay couples’ cohabitation contracts is to expressly formulate them as business agreements omitting any mention of the parties’ relationship.” Ertman, Contractual Purgatory, supra note 223, at 1138. See, e.g., Posik v. Layton, 695 So.2d 759 (Fla. Dist. App. 1997) (holding enforceable a written agreement providing that if Posik breached agreement she would pay Layton $2500 per month for rest of Layton’s life), Crooke v. Gilden, 414 S.E.2d 645 (Ga. 1992) (upholding contract between lesbian couple for joint ownership and division of real property, reversing trial court’s decision that contract was void because parties’ ‘illegal and immoral’ sexual relationship implicitly was part of contract).
247 Christensen, If Not Marriage, supra note 172, at 1733–34; Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13, at 1321–22. Even when members of a couple contract with each other, this does not change the couple’s situation in relation to third parties. For example, as Christensen points out, an individual may try and negotiate with his employer to have the employer pay for the health insurance of the life partner, but this is unlikely to be successful. See id. at 1346. Ertman argues that enforcement of gay couples’ contracts is better than nothing; this is not disputed. Ertman, Contractual Purgatory, supra note 223, at 1110.
248 See supra notes 86–89 and accompanying text.
249 But see Scott, Relational Contract, supra note 1; Ertman, Commercializing Marriage, supra note 86.
250 See supra notes 86–89 and accompanying text; Fellows et al., Committed Partners and Inheritance, supra note 174, at 19–22; Silbaugh, Family Economy, supra note 14, at 134. The facilitative function of enforcing contracts stands in some tension with the aspect of the
parties to think in self-oriented, rather than familialistic terms. Moreover, it is impractical and undesirable for gay male and lesbian couples to have to order their lives together by written contracts. Thus, this aspect of the facilitative function does not substitute for marriage.

Regarding the protective function, several things should be acknowledged. First, family law in general does not fulfill the protective function particularly well. Second, most states' laws about domestic violence, a classic example of the current protective function, do not exclude gay or lesbian couples. Reports exist that gay and lesbian victims of domestic violence often do not get effective help through the court system even when the laws cover their situation. Perhaps marriage by same-gender couples would persuade judges and other court personnel to take such abuse more seriously.

251 See supra notes 72-75 and accompanying text.
252 See Christensen, If Not Marriage, supra note 172, at 1733; Christensen, Legal Ordering, supra note 13, at 1344-47.
254 See Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 497.
255 See Sandra E. Lundy, Abuse That Dare Not Speak its Name: Assisting Victims of Lesbian and Gay Domestic Violence in Massachusetts, 28 NEW. ENG. L. REV. 273, 292 n.105 (1994). Some states' statutes, however, apply only to heterosexual couples. See id. In addition, problems initially arose with some statutes' application to gay and lesbian couples. For example, prior to statutory amendments, Maine's law stated that one could seek a protective order if the parties were or had been "spouses or living as spouses." A trial judge dismissed a complaint by a lesbian against her allegedly abusive partner, reasoning that because lesbians could not marry one another they could not live "as spouses." Thus, the alleged victim could not seek relief under the statute. Sax v. Bowler, No. 87—CV—PA-697 (Maine Dist. Ct. Dec. 1, 1987) (order dismissing complaint). But see State v. Hadinger, 573 N.E.2d 1191, 1192 (Ohio Ct. App. 1991) (holding that two people of the same gender can be living "as ... spouse[s]" with one another for purposes of application of the domestic violence statute).

256 See generally Lundy, Abuse that Dare Not Speak its Name, supra note 255.
257 It may seem somewhat surprising to bring up domestic abuse in the context of marriage and to speculate that marriage may increase sensitivity to domestic abuse, given the history of ignoring abuse in marriage. Marriage does not provide an excuse for ignoring abuse, however; and perhaps recent increased awareness of dynamics within relationships may make courts more responsive when a gay married partner abuses his or her spouse. As Hafen notes, "the new skepticism about relationships of dependency has exposed certain
Another aspect of the protective function is “protecting people from economic harms and psychological injuries.” State intervention to protect from such injuries in an ongoing marriage is, and should be, rare. Current divorce law is not an inspiring model of protections against economic harms or psychological injuries. Nonetheless, the mechanisms of alimony and equitable distribution of property provide the potential for some protection, at least, for the economically weaker party. By contrast, where there is no marriage, there is no mechanism to seek long-term or short-term support for a dependent party when a relationship ends. There is no practical mechanism to distribute real property between the title holder and the other partner.

Regarding dispute resolution, procedural and substantive assistance are both lacking. The vast majority of states now have laws that either require or recommend mediation for family disputes. Family law is the area in which mediation is most frequently mandated. No mediation process exists for property or custody disputes between same-gender couples, and the legal principles available for married couples to deal with inequality in ownership of property when a relationship breaks up are absent. The legal system should be available if patterns of abuse and domination that cried out for closer public and legal scrutiny,“

258 Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 497.
259 See Baker, supra note 124, at 1535–38 (describing reasons law generally should not intervene in ongoing horizontal relationships).
260 Numerous scholars have written about how divorce, for example, does not protect the less economically powerful spouse. See, e.g., MARTHA F. FINEMAN, THE ILLUSION OF EQUALITY: THE RHETORIC AND REALITY OF DIVORCE REFORM (1991); ETRUMAN, COMMERCIALIZING MARRIAGE, supra note 86, at 17–22, 31; Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 497.
261 It is difficult to analyze how current divorce law protects from psychological injuries. Although it was hoped that no-fault divorce would reduce the acrimony in divorces, it is not clear if that has taken place. Spouses now often can sue after marriage for torts such as intentional infliction of emotional distress during the marriage. See Hakkila v. Hakkila, 812 P.2d 1320, 1326–27 (N.M. 1991); McCoy v. Cooke, 419 N.W.2d 44, 46 (Mich. App. 1988); Courtney v. Courtney, 413 S.E.2d 418, 420 (W. Va. 1991); Stuart v. Stuart, 421 N.W.2d 505 (Wisc. 1988). It is not clear, however, if that threat serves as a deterrent and thus protects against psychological injuries.
264 See id. § 7.01, ch. 7 p. 4.
a relationship breaks up to ensure that the less powerful party is protected.265

C. The Channelling Function

According to Schneider, the channelling function works through social institutions, "which are thought to serve desirable ends," such as marriage.266 The institutions used in channelling "necessarily have normative components."267 Not being allowed to be part of an institution is a channelling mechanism in itself; being treated as a legal stranger to one's mate is an example of law's channelling function in action.268

Channelling institutions create clear boundaries and impose expectations, providing useful models for people and sparing people the necessity of making up rules and institutions from scratch.269 To illustrate this, Schneider invokes the image of "two nineteen-year-olds living in a state of nature who find themselves in love," and discusses how marriage customs and law in the mid-twentieth century would guide, but not coerce, them.270 He does not identify the race or gender of the nineteen-year-olds. But he seems to be assuming that they are of different genders, since two nineteen-year-olds of the same gender who found themselves in love in the mid-twentieth century would not have been provided guidance from law or custom about what to do to live out their love.271 He also seems to be assuming that

265 There are major issues about how well the law currently performs this function in the context of divorce. It is designed, however, more for that function than the law concerning strangers. See supra note 260.
266 Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 498.
267 See id. at 529.
268 See id. at 510.
269 See id. at 507–11.
270 Id. at 508.
271 Two nineteen-year-olds of the same gender who found themselves in love in the mid-twentieth century indeed would be likely to have had a difficult time acting on their feelings. The 1950s were the heyday of the psychiatric notion that homosexuality was sick. For example, in 1952 the American Psychiatric Association, Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Mental Disorders (DSM-I) listed homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance. Neil Miller, Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present 249 (1995). During that period, gays were frequently dismissed from government and other jobs simply because of their homosexuality (or suspicions of same) and there was an "atmosphere of persecution and purge nationwide." Id. at 271. Given the situation in the 1950s, the hypothetical same-gender nineteen-year-olds might simply have been isolated and not fallen in love. In The Channelling Function, Schneider discusses a hypothetical legislator who posits a "normative model of 'marriage' with several fundamental characteristics. It is monogamous, heterosexual, and permanent." Schneider, The Channelling Function,
they are of the same race, because an interracial couple in the mid-1950s probably could not marry legally, and even if they could, custom would impose severe sanctions on the couple.272 Channelling thus works not to urge any two hypothetical nineteen-year-olds into the tried-and-true positive institution of marriage, but only certain nineteen-year-olds deemed by law and custom to be suitable for one another. This is not very different from what Schneider says the channelling function does,273 but it illustrates that examples of channelling which are assumed at first to represent general guidance toward a general good actually may be founded on unspoken but strictly enforced exclusions and coercion.

In discussing the workings of the channelling function, Schneider analogizes marriage to tennis, pointing out that participants in tennis benefit from rules already being in place and that participants

supra note 1, at 500-01. The legislator writes "standards" for entry into marriage "which prohibit homosexual unions," Id. at 502. Thus, it appears that the two nineteen-year-olds are intended to be of different genders.

272 In 1955, "[a]t least half of the States of the Union [had] miscegenation statutes." Naim v. Naim, 87 S.E.2d 749, 753 (Va. 1955). In the 1950s, Alabama, for example, still criminally prosecuted violations of its miscegenation statute and Virginia still enforced its prohibitions. Peter Wallenstein, Race, Marriage, and the Law of Freedom: Alabama and Virginia 1860s-1960s, 70 CHI. KENT L. REV. 371, 412, 416 (1994). Gunnar Myrdal in 1944 noted the centrality of the bans on racial intermarriage for the system of white supremacy. GUNNAR MYRDAL, An AMERICAN DILEMMA 606 (1944). Arnold Rose, in his official summary of Myrdal's book, wrote "[e]ven in the northern states where, for the most part, intermarriage is not barred by law, mixed couples are punished by nearly complete social ostracism." ARNOLD ROSE, THE NEGRO IN AMERICA 22 (1948); see also Morgan, supra note 128 (describing prosecutions of prominent champion black boxer Jack Johnson in 1920s for violation of Mann Act because he married white women and hired white women prostitutes). The idea of black men socializing with white women has continued past the 1950s to be racially charged for many. For example, in 1981 a black man in Alabama was lynched; suggestions were made in the community that he was killed for socializing with white women or was mistaken for a co-worker who socialized with white women. N.Y. TIMES, July 28, 1981, at A12, col. 6. Three white men arrested for the murder were released after a grand jury refused to issue indictments. Id. at A12, col. 6. Given the barriers of racism, racist violence and segregation of the 1950s, the hypothetical nineteen-year-olds might well never have met or fallen in love. And if the hypothetical nineteen-year-olds were of different races and of the same gender, their romance seems even less likely.

273 Schneider notes that "channelling's worth in any particular instance will depend on the specific institutions it supports. Even if an institution serves the function's ends well, it must be evaluated in terms of all its social consequences." Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 522. The major mechanisms of channelling to him are to create social institutions and to channel people into them through several methods. One method is recognizing and endorsing the institution; another is rewarding participation in an institution; a third is disfavoring competing institutions; a fourth is penalizing non-use of an institution. See id. at 503-04. "By and large, then, the channelling function does not primarily use direct legal coercion." Id. at 504.
who try and make up rules from scratch would be less likely to invent as good a game as that which already exists. "Tennis, in other words, succeeds because it is a shared and well-established institution. Marriage and parenthood benefit from that same fact."274 This analogy highlights the benefit of having rules, which of course are considerable,275 but provides no way of thinking about whether the actual rules are fair or otherwise beneficial.276 Schneider is correct to note that family law institutions have a normative component and inevitably channel (or attempt to channel) people in certain directions.277

The structure of excluding gay male and lesbian couples from marriage may be seen as trying to channel people who have a same-gender sexual orientation into either marrying someone of the opposite gender or into spending their lives without a mate. Regarding the first option, as Mark Strasser points out, "it is unlikely that a marriage between an individual with a same-sex orientation and an individual with an opposite-sex orientation would be happy or stable."278 Unhappy and unstable marriages tend not to be good for the participants or the wider society and are likely to end up as divorces, which can have their own negative consequences.279 Thus, if this is what the channelling function is trying to do, it is not a sensible goal. Regarding the second option, of channelling gay men and lesbians into perpetually single lives, this seems counterproductive given the positive consequences that intimate, stable relationships have for couples, and thus for society as a whole, regardless of gender.280

274 Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 511.
275 See supra notes 250-62 and accompanying text (pointing out importance of statutory mechanisms such as equitable property distribution, alimony, and alternative dispute resolution).
276 See Baker, Property Rules, supra note 124, at 153 n.159 (discussing Schneider’s tennis game analogy and showing that fact that a game has rules does not mean that rules are fair or equally challenging to all participants). In the case of marriage law historically, the rules have been tremendously unfair to women. See supra notes 108-130 and accompanying text. Currently, marriage laws are tremendously unfair to gay men and lesbians.
277 See, e.g., Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 816 (noting that family law is infused with moral concerns).
278 STRASSER, supra note 7, at 72.
279 See Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 819-22 n.124 (reviewing scholarship about divorce and its correlations with child poverty and other negative factors).
280 As the Vermont Supreme Court wrote, "[t]he state's interest in extending official recognition and legal protection to the professed commitment of two individuals to a lasting relationship of mutual affection is predicated on the belief that legal support of a couple's commitment provides stability for the individuals, their family, and the broader
The current channelling also makes no sense because it treats so differently relationships that are the same or equivalent. Intimate, committed, coupled, same-gender relationships should be treated the same by law, in that participants in them should be able to marry, for numerous reasons. First, they are subjectively the same (or equivalent) to the participants. They should be valued for the same reasons that marriages are valued. Various types of marriage relationships are valued in this society. As Carlos Ball points out, "the normative value of a committed homosexual relationship is just as high—the affection, the love, the fidelity, the commitment are the same as in a committed heterosexual relationship." In addition to being morally good, long-term intimate dependent or interdependent relationships also can have positive instrumental consequences: they can foster individuals' stability and health. Healthy, happy, stable, supported individuals in turn tend to contribute more to communities than do unhealthy, unhappy individuals. Resource-pooling by couples is helpful for economic independence and stability for the couple (and hence for the community) because of the economies of scale involved. In a committed couple relationship, where one partner becomes ill, the other partner often cares for the ill partner, providing family care that does not need to be provided by the state. This benefits both the individuals involved and the state. Moreover, full inclusion of gay couples in society will further full participation by gay people in society which is a worthwhile goal. A society where people are disconnected from one another is a society in danger of disinte-
migration; law plays an important role in furthering and supporting connections between people.\textsuperscript{287}

Gay couples currently are unable to reproduce biologically with one another. Yet this should not be a basis for the law's current channelling activity.\textsuperscript{288} The United States Supreme Court has made clear that reproduction is not critical to marriage.\textsuperscript{289} In \emph{Turner v. Safley},\textsuperscript{290} which dealt with constitutionality of marriage restrictions on prison inmates, the Supreme Court discussed what attributes of marriage remained after taking into account incarceration:

\emph{[i]nmate marriages, like others, are expressions of emotional support and public commitment. These elements are an important and significant aspect of the marital relationship. In addition... the commitment of marriage may be an exercise of religious faith as well as an expression of personal dedication. Third, most inmates eventually will be released by parole or commutation, and therefore most inmate marriages are formed in the expectation that they ultimately will be consummated. Finally, marital status often is a precondition to the receipt of government benefits... property rights... and other, less tangible benefits.}\textsuperscript{291}

\textsuperscript{287} \textsc{Glendon, Transformation Of Family Law, supra note 2, at 306-13. As Schneider says, "[f]or people to be moved to help each other, they need some sense of commonality with them—some sense that their fellow citizens are people like themselves, whose experiences, concerns, and interests they can at least understand and to some degree share. Social institutions help provide such a sense." Schneider, \textit{Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 511. Extending this observation, the exclusion from marriage reduces the "sense of commonality" that heterosexuals otherwise might feel with gay men and lesbians. Glendon notes that the extent of law's influence is difficult to measure. It is easy to exaggerate law's influence, yet that influence is significant and must not be ignored. See \textsc{Glendon, Transformation Of Family Law, supra note 2, at 311-13. Schneider also notes the difficulty of measuring the consequences of legal programs. See Schneider, \textit{Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 521-22.}

\textsuperscript{288} For example, in Hafen's discussion of "belonging," there is no requirement that the "belonging" be related to procreation, although of course often it is related to parenting and children. See Hafen, \textit{Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4. He writes that the lack of "belonging" and the demands it makes, are "a major loss to society," but procreation is not a necessary or sufficient condition for belonging. See \textit{id. at 41.}

\textsuperscript{289} For example, in \textit{Griswold v. Connecticut, 381 U.S. 479 (1965), the Supreme Court decided that the state could not bar access of married couples to contraceptives, thus showing that the state could not decide that procreation was essential to marriage.}

\textsuperscript{290} 482 U.S. 78 (1987).

\textsuperscript{291} 482 U.S. at 96.
Moreover, childless heterosexual couples are recognized as fully mar-
rried292 as are infertile or elderly couples who marry.293 Many gay cou-
ples raise children whether they are from prior relationships or come
into the family through adoption or assisted conception.294 As Craig
Christensen has shown, marriage would benefit these children.295 We
are past the time, if indeed there ever was such a time, when unitary
principles can be applied in all circumstances to all marriages.296 The
normative goals of marriage generally are furthered by extending
marriage to same-gender couples.

Perhaps the idea is that channelling everyone into heterosexual
marriage or life without a mate is a good thing because same-gender;
intimate, committed, couple relationships"are immoral and, there-
fore, should be discouraged by family law's mechanisms.297 Same-

292 See Hafen, Constitutional Status, supra note 4, at 490 (noting variety of acceptable
family forms including childless marriages). Glendon has proposed that there should be a
particular set of divorce rules designed for childless couples where marriages of short du-
ration end. See GLENDON, ABORTION AND DIVORCE, supra note 2, at 103.

293 There is a scholarly debate about the ethical and moral significance of sexual activ-
ity between heterosexual married members of a sterile couple as compared to the ethical
and moral significance of sex between members of a gay male or lesbian couple. See, e.g.,
(arguing that there is no significant ethical difference between the two situations.); Gerald
(arguing that justifying point of sexual relations between spouses is not pleasure or expres-
sions of feeling but is intrinsic good of marriage considered as one-flesh communion of
spouses actualized by acts which, qua reproductive acts, unite spouses biologically); Patrick
Lee & Robert P. George, What Sex Can Be: Self-Alienation, Illusion, or One-Flesh Union, 42 Am.
J. JURIS. 135, 150 (1997) (arguing that heterosexual couples "who engage in a reproduc-
tive type act, truly become one body, one organism," and that this difference between het-
erosexual sex and homosexual sex is morally significant); John M. Finnis, Law, Morality,
and "Sexual Orientation," 69 Notre Dame L. Rev. 1049, 1066 (1994) (arguing that "union
of reproductive organs of husband and wife unites them biologically, and this unites them
personally, whereas gay couples' sexual activity can not make them a biological and there-
fore a personal unit"); Koppelman, Is Marriage Inherently Heterosexual?, supra note 21, 51,
62-95 (arguing that even if marriage is noninstrumental good, it is not necessarily hetero-
sexual and couples do not need to engage in "sexual acts of the reproductive kind" in or-
der to realize its goods).

294 See Christensen, If Not Marriage, supra note 172, at 1759–68; Christensen, Legal Or-
dering, supra note 13.

295 Christensen, If Not Marriage, supra note 172, at 1759–68, Christensen, Legal Or-
dering, supra note 13. The trial court in Baehr v. Miike came to a similar conclusion. See Civ. No.

296 As Schneider writes, "I doubt that you can go home again, and even if you could, I
 doubt you would enjoy it." Schneider, Moral Discourse, supra note 1, at 1808.

297 This notion is basically equivalent to the argument that gay people, by seeking ac-
cess to marriage, are "repudiating morality," made by Wardle in Efforts to Legitimate, supra
note 19. This argument is discussed in more detail in Part IV.C, infra.
gender relationships, however, are not immoral and in fact can be normatively good. The current channelling of gay people into either perpetually single lives or heterosexual marriage is therefore both counterproductive and destructive, because it discourages normatively good relationships. Family law models that are rooted in moral concerns, such as Bartlett's, Cahn's, Minow's, and Regan's, all support marriage by same-gender couples.

IV. Arguments Against Allowing Marriage by Same-Gender Couples and Responses to These Arguments

Those opposed to marriage by same-gender couples would likely respond that the current story of non-recognition is exactly the "story that should be told by law." Law should "channel" people into heterosexual marriage. The question remains as to why law should tell this story; why should this channelling be attempted, given all the observations that have been made above? There is a growing literature on this topic. This section will discuss several arguments recently made against marriage by same-gender couples, and will oppose those

298 See Regan, supra note 5, at 120; Ball, supra note 7, at 1936-1942; Brinig, supra note 149, at 1600; Michael Perry. The Morality of Homosexual Conduct: A Response to John Finnis, 9 Notre Dame J. L. Ethics & Pub. Pol'y 41, 55 (1995). See Part IV.C for further discussion.

299 Bartlett writes that "reforms... such as gay and lesbian marriage, are also supportable" within her "family-enabling model of reform." Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 854. Cahn's idea of a "new Family Morality," based on values of commitment, caring and equity, recognizes that efforts to allow same-gender couples to marry "reflect the importance and value of marriage and represent efforts to strengthen, not undermine the institution." Cahn, Review Essay: The Moral Complexities of Family Law, supra note 96, at 246. Minow's idea that we should create welcoming rules governing entry into families and be strict about enforcing family responsibilities, leads to allowing gay men and lesbians to be family members. Minow, All in the Family, supra note 5, at 307; Minow, Redefining Families, supra note 86, at 280-82. Regarding the view that gay men and lesbians should be excluded from family membership, she writes, "[i]t will not do... to support this view by reference to nature, convention, or even religion. Many religions are themselves struggling with these questions. Some are performing marriages of gays and lesbians, and some are ordaining gay and lesbian clergy. Minow, All in the Family, supra note 5, at 283-84. Regan's retooled status-based model of marriage calls for recognition of marriage by same-gender couples. See Regan, supra note 5, at 120.


301 Lynn Wardle makes these arguments against same-gender marriage in Efforts to legitimate, supra note 19.
arguments with points developed in the preceding section. One is that the effort to broaden access to marriage is actually a retreat from marriage.\(^{302}\) The second is that heterosexual marriage necessarily has greater potential for benefiting individuals and society than does marriage by same-gender couples.\(^{303}\) Third is the argument that efforts to seek same-gender marriage are a repudiation of morality.\(^{304}\)

A. The Argument that the Effort to Allow Same-Gender Couples to Marry Is Actually a Retreat from Marriage

Lynn D. Wardle argues that the effort to extend marriage to same-gender couples actually is an effort to retreat from marriage.\(^{305}\) The couples over the last twenty-nine years who have gone first to town clerk's offices and then to court to try to get married would dispute this. Contrary to Wardle's contention, the effort to broaden access to marriage is not an effort to retreat from it. The couples involved are trying to have their intimate, committed relationships recognized by the state through marriage. As Naomi Cahn has pointed out, the efforts to allow same-gender partners to marry "reflect the importance and value of marriage and represent attempts to strengthen, not undermine, the institution."\(^{306}\) The efforts through the courts have not sought a particular type of marriage, but just access to marriage, with the same responsibilities and rights as everyone else.

Wardle notes that some writers advocating marriage by same-gender couples have called for changing marriage,\(^{307}\) as if that means that they want to retreat from it.\(^{308}\) He cites one writer who argues that "legalizing same-sex unions might even transform marriage into a state divested of its sexist base."\(^{309}\) Some of the historical sexist basis of

\(^{302}\) See infra Part IV.A.

\(^{303}\) See infra Part IV.B.

\(^{304}\) See infra Part IV.C.

\(^{305}\) Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 758. He claims that "[i]n reality, it is a profound, but subtle and disarming, rejection of marriage." Id.


\(^{307}\) See Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 758.

\(^{308}\) Marriage has changed constantly over the centuries. Mary Ann Glendon calls it a "polymorphous and mutable institution." GLENDON, TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW, supra note 2, at 4; see supra note 55.

marriage has been discussed above, and if marriage by same-gender couples makes marriage less sexist, this is a good thing. As Schneider notes, simply because the institution of marriage is "developing, does not mean that [its] normative core will disappear."

Loud calls for changing marriage have been heard in our nation's history. For example, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in her famous Address to the Legislature of the State of New York, in 1854, stated:

Look at the position of woman as wife. Your laws relating to marriage—founded as they are on the old common law of England, a compound of barbarous usages, but partially modified by progressive civilization—are in open violation of our enlightened ideas of justice, and of the holiest feelings of our nature.

While advocating radical changes in marriage laws, Stanton was not advocating a retreat from marriage. Marriage and marriage law have been constantly changing, and seemingly fundamental aspects of both have changed.

Various scholars have argued in recent years that bans on marriage by same-gender couples are gender discrimination. Wardle counters this view by claiming that "heterosexual marriage is the oldest gender-equality institution in the law." This statement is difficult—some would say impossible—to reconcile with the history of women's subordination explicit in marriage laws until recently.

Wardle then goes on to state that "[t]he requirement that marriage consist of both a man and a woman emphasizes the absolute equality and equal necessity of both sexes for the most fundamental

510 See supra Part II.B.
511 Schneider, The Channelling Function, supra note 1, at 519.
512 Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Address to the Legislature of the State of New York (February 14, 1854), in History Of Women's Suffrage, 1848-1861, at 595-605 (Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony & Matilda Joslyn Gage, eds., reprint ed. 1985), reprinted in Katherine T. Bartlett and Angela P. Harris, supra note 253, at 57, 60.
513 See Strasser, supra note 7, at 117-20. See generally Glendon, Transformation Of Family Law, supra note 2; Graff, supra note 55; Grossberg, supra note 55; Stone, supra note 55.
515 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 753.
516 See supra Part II.B.
unit of society."\textsuperscript{317} Here he seems to narrow the immediately prior claim that "heterosexual marriage" as a whole "is" a gender equality institution, and instead to make the seemingly more modest claim that the man-woman requirement "emphasizes" the "absolute equality" and "equal necessity" of both sexes. However, this statement is also problematic. An "absolute equality" between the sexes can not be "emphasized" if it does not exist in the first place.\textsuperscript{318} The idea that "traditional" marriage "emphasizes" the "equality" of the sexes makes no sense in view of the history of marriage.\textsuperscript{319} Moreover, the statement that the man-woman requirement is a way of "emphasizing" the "equal necessity" of both sexes in society's "most fundamental unit" is simply a way of restating the requirement. In other words, it says that the man-woman requirement is a requirement because it is necessary for the unit. This neither explains nor justifies the requirement itself.\textsuperscript{320}

Moreover, even if heterosexual marriage is a "gender-equality institution," this does not mean that marriage by same-gender couples is not also a gender-equality institution. Some have argued that marriage between two people of the same gender may be more likely to be a gender-equality institution than heterosexual marriage in view of the relative lack of stereotyped gender roles that people may bring to such marriages.\textsuperscript{321} It may be that allowing people of the same gender to marry will be more likely to further gender equality than the current restriction does.\textsuperscript{322}

\textsuperscript{317} Wardle, \textit{Efforts to Legitimate}, supra note 19, at 753.  
\textsuperscript{318} See supra note 127.  
\textsuperscript{319} See supra Part II.B.  
\textsuperscript{320} Wardle emphasizes information about lack of male monogamy in committed gay male relationships as part of his effort to show that seeking marriage is a retreat from it. See Wardle, \textit{Efforts to Legitimate}, supra note 19, at 759-60. However, this does not shed light on what behavior will be if marriage by same-gender couples is allowed. According to \textit{Sex In America}, "no matter what \{married couples\} did before they wed, no matter how many partners they had, the sexual lives of married people are similar. Despite the popular myth that there is a great deal of adultery in marriage, our data and other reliable studies do not find it. Instead, a vast majority are faithful while the marriage is intact." ROBERT T. MICHAEL ET AL., \textit{S\textsc{ex} \textsc{i}n \textsc{a}m\textsc{e}ri\textsc{c}a: A D\textsc{e}f\textsc{i}n\textsc{t}i\textsc{v}e S\textsc{u}r\textsc{v}e\textsc{y}} 89 (1994). Some reach different conclusions, however, about the prevalence of adultery. See, e.g., Joan D. Atwood and Madeline Seifer, Extramarital Affairs and Constructed Meanings: A Social Constructionist Therapeutic Approach, 25 \textsc{Amer. J. of Family Therapy} 55 (1997) (estimating 50-60\% of married men and 45-55\% of married women engage in extramarital sex at some time during their marriage).  
\textsuperscript{322} See generally Becker, \textit{Women and Morality}, supra note 7.
Wardle also takes an absolutist view of the man-woman requirement:

[C]laims for same-sex marriage cannot exist with the belief that there is an inherent, essential nature of marriage or that marriage reflects something fundamental and inherent in the natures of men and women. Nor can the concept that marriage is ordained by God, and has some absolute fixed, immutable characteristics, coexist with belief in same-sex marriage.323

While Wardle and others324 believe a certain kind of marriage is ordained by God, other religious denominations believe that God welcomes marriages by same-gender couples.325 In a society where marriage is a civil institution,326 it is not sufficient to justify the marriage exclusion by asserting that God has defined marriage in a certain way.327

Wardle also claims that marriage by same-gender couples is logically inconsistent with marriage by different-gender couples:

[C]laims for same-sex marriage logically presuppose a rejection of traditional marriage because they are based upon fundamentally incompatible concepts of marriage and humanity .... Inevitably claims for same-sex marriage must lead to rejection of traditional male-female marriage that is predicated on an incompatible belief in the inherent natures of humanity and marriage.328

323 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 76.
324 See, e.g., Finnis, Law, Morality and “Sexual Orientation,” supra note 293; O’Brien, supra note 300. See Part IV.C. for further discussion of Finnis’ arguments.
325 See STRASSER, supra note 7, at 12–13; see also ESKRIDGE, supra note 7, at 193–217 (Appendix: Letters from the Faithful on the Legal Recognition of Same-Sex Marriage).
326 See supra note 103.
327 For additional discussion, see infra notes 373–376 and accompanying text. See Baker v. Vermont, 1999 WL1211709, at *23 (Dec. 20, 1999) (noting that “it is plaintiff’s claim to the secular benefits and protections of marriage that ... characterizes this case”). As Martha Minow states regarding those who support the view that gay men and lesbians should be excluded from the privileges of family membership, “[i]t will not do ... to support this view by reference to nature, convention, or even religion. Many religions are themselves struggling with these questions; some are performing marriages for gays and lesbians, some are ordaining gay and lesbian clergy.” Minow, All in the Family, supra note 5, at 284.
328 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 762. The notion that the man-woman requirement “reflects something fundamental and inherent in the natures of men and women” is discussed more fully at infra Part IV.B.
Despite his insistence, there is no reason why claims for marriage by same-gender couples "must lead to a rejection" of "traditional male-female marriage." Same-gender couples who seek to marry in this society are not thereby rejecting or denigrating "traditional male-female marriage." It does not diminish the rights or responsibilities of male-female married couples to allow same-gender couples to marry.

In sum, the effort to broaden access to civil marriage so that gay male and lesbian couples can marry is simply what it seems to be—an effort to allow such couples to marry. Calls for marriage reform, and changes in marriage laws, recur throughout United States and European history. Allowing gay male and lesbian couples to marry does not affect the rights and responsibilities of heterosexual married couples and does not entail a rejection of heterosexual marriage.

B. The Argument That Heterosexual Marriage Necessarily Has Greater Potential for Benefitting Individuals and Society Than Does Marriage by Same-Gender Couples

Wardle also argues that there is something inherent in committed relationships between opposite sex couples that makes such relationships more important and worth supporting than relationships between couples of the same gender. He writes "[n]o other companionate relationship provides the same great potential for benefiting individuals and society as the heterosexual covenant union we call marriage and that is why only committed heterosexual unions are given the legal status of marriage." He also claims that "the integration of the universe of gender differences (profound and subtle, biological and cultural, psychological and genetic) associated with sexual identity, constitutes the core and essence of marriage." He does not seem to assert that the purpose of marriage is procreation and that is why the institution should be limited to persons of opposite genders.

The values of connection and commitment, so important to individuals and society, have heterosexuality and heterosexual marriage as neither a necessary nor sufficient condition. People of the same gender engage in "familistic" behavior, support one another and others, become financially dependent on one another, and so on. The

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529 Given the historical evidence about changes in the functions, laws, and customs surrounding marriage, it is not at all clear what, if anything, "traditional male-female marriage" means. See generally GRAFF, supra note 55.
530 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 749.
531 Id. at 748.
532 See Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 23–24.
potential for community involvement and individual fulfillment that exists for heterosexual couples also exists for same-gender couples. For example, Margaret F. Brinig, in an article calling for use of the term "covenant" in the context of marriage, writes that same-sex couples "can make the permanent commitment and exhibit the selfless loving and giving required for a covenant." 

The rewards of being in a couple and being married and the demands serious commitment makes can also be rewards to society. Assuming that Hafen's statement that "legal marriage is more likely than is unmarried cohabitation to encourage ... personal willingness to labor and invest in relationships with other people, whether child or adult" is correct, this counsels for recognizing same-gender relationships, not for pretending they do not exist. If individuals do not plumb the depths of their commitments to each other, society suffers a loss. 

Wardle's statement that "the integration of the universe of gender differences ... associated with sexual identity constitutes the core and essence of marriage" is problematic for a number of related reasons. First, it assumes that there is a "core and essence of marriage" and that he knows what that is. Others view the core and essence of marriage as consisting of love and commitment. Second, it ignores the historical evidence that marriage is a social and economic institution whose functions have changed radically through the course of Western history. Third, it assumes that certain gender differences are known and universal and thus essentializes gender. Fourth, it is based on gender stereotyping and ignores the vast variations in gender differences that occur across cultures and among individuals.

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535 Brinig, supra note 149, at 1600.
534 Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 38-40.
536 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 748.
537 Elsewhere in the article, Wardle seems to endorse the idea that "marriage is ordained by God, and has some absolute fixed immutable characteristics." Id. at 761-62. It appears from the reference to the integration of gender differences being the core and essence of marriage, that to him the man-woman requirement is one of the most important, if not the most important, of the "fixed immutable characteristics" of marriage.
538 See, e.g., REGAN, supra note 5, at 120.
539 See supra note 55. Glendon, for example, writes that marriage has evolved to being an institution now held together primarily by emotional ties as opposed to earlier times when it was held together primarily by financial and procreative ties. See GLENDON, TRANSFORMATION OF FAMILY LAW, supra note 2, at 293.
Finally, it ignores differences that might exist along race and class lines.341

Lesbian and gay male couples in committed, loving, marital relationships assert that their relationships are of great benefit to themselves and society. If pressed to compare these relationships with others’ relationships, they argue that their relationships are in all relevant senses equivalent to heterosexuals’ marriage relationships. Gay people and their supporters claim that the potential of a companionate relationship to benefit individuals and society has to do with the individuals and their relationship, not with their gender. 342

Wardle asserts that this “functional equivalence” argument is invalid because it is “over-inclusive,” since “people who are engaged in incestuous relations” also may argue that their relationships “are functionally equivalent to traditional marriages (and certainly to same-sex unions) in terms of their preferences and commitments.”343 Comparing the relationships of people who are “engaged in incestuous relations” with the relationships of same-gender couples is inapt. First, Wardle never defines “incestuous relations,” so it is difficult to know precisely what kinds of relations he is talking about. As Carolyn Bratt has noted, “the mere word ‘incest’ triggers strong feelings of revulsion in most people . . . . Such revulsion stems largely from the confusion of incest with the sexual abuse of children.”344 Bratt highlights the important distinction between “state incest statutes as a vehicle for prohibiting and punishing sexual abuse of minors and state incest statutes as a marriage prohibition for adults,”345 while Wardle elides the distinction.

trial judge found that this was not a strong enough argument for the marriage restrictions sufficient to survive a 12(b) (6) motion, since it was based on impermissible sex stereotyping. See id. In the Vermont Supreme Court’s recent decision in Baker v. Vermont, this argument was alluded to but not discussed. Baker v. Vermont, 1999 WL1211709, at *19 (referring to “state’s purported interests . . . in bridging differences between the sexes”). See generally JUDITH BUTLER, GENDER TROUBLE: FEMINISM AND THE SUBVERSION OF IDENTITY (1990).

341 See, e.g., Twila Perry, Alimony, Race, Privilege and Dependency, supra note 128 (noting that issues of alimony and dependency on average may be very different for black women than for white women).

342 See supra notes 280–82 and accompanying text.

343 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 749.


345 Id. at 258; see also Leigh B. Bienen, Defining Incest, 92 Nw. U. L. Rev. 1501 (1998) (discussing history of incest laws and prosecutions).
Assuming that the "incestuous relations" Wardle is referring to are instances of sexual intercourse between a father and a minor daughter, criminal laws cover such situations. If Wardle is referring to marriages that run afoul of state incest restrictions, perhaps there is ground to challenge some such restrictions. While detailed consideration of the issue of laws against incestuous marriages is beyond the scope of this article, Carolyn Bratt provides a lengthy explanation as to why marriage incest statutes do not protect against genetic defects and argues that many such restrictions do not withstand "objective evaluation." The considerable state-by-state variation in incest-marriage provisions may confirm this. Nonetheless, some incest-marriage provisions may protect against actual harms. By contrast, no harms follow, to the participants or to anyone else, from the participation of lesbian and gay adults in committed, loving, coupled, marital relationships. Thus, to point to the hypothetical example of people enjoying incestuous relationships does not mean that gay couples' functional equivalence argument is invalid.

The functional equivalence argument is valid, as shown above. Since family law should value and nurture positive, serious commitments between adults, it should recognize marriage by same-gender couples. If we want to encourage people to have personal commit-
ments to others and lead interdependent lives, we should allow civil marriage by same-gender couples.

C. The Argument that Gay Men and Lesbians Seeking Access to Marriage Are Repudiating Morality

Wardle states that "it seems inconsistent for gay and lesbian advocates to appeal to one moral value—equality—at the same time as they repudiate morality (i.e., the traditional moral opposition to homosexual practices and exclusive preference for sex within heterosexual marriage) as an improper basis for marriage laws." 353 The idea that gay men and lesbians seeking to broaden access to marriage are thereby "repudiating morality" is unsupported.

First, as Mark Strasser points out, "same-sex relationships are not immoral, just as interracial relationships are not immoral, majority view notwithstanding. Neither type of relationship harms anyone." 354 Moreover, the normative value of a committed gay male or lesbian couple relationship is the same as in a committed heterosexual relationship. 355 Second, the use of the term "morality" is not determinative, since arguments based on "morality" have been used to justify both morality and immorality. 356 There are genuine differences about what constitutes "morality" regarding sexual behavior, and thus it is not accurate to accuse people of "repudiating morality" if they are seeking the right to marry. 357

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353 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 756.
354 Strasser, supra note 7, at 72.
355 See Ball, supra note 7, at 1938. See generally note 193 and sources cited therein.
356 See Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7, at 167. Becker notes that "moral and religious arguments have supported and opposed violence, slavery, and patriarchy." Id.
357 In Sex In America, the researchers found that nearly half of the sample fall in what the authors called the "relational" category, whose members believed "that sex should be part of a loving relationship, but that it need not always be reserved for marriage. These people, who make up nearly half our sample, disagree with the statement that premarital
Wardle refers to "morality" in this context as "the traditional moral opposition to homosexual practices and exclusive preference for sex within heterosexual marriage." This view of "morality" is similar to, and appears to be based at least in part on, that of the "new natural law theorists." These writers claim to prove, on the basis of natural law, that "sexual acts are morally right only within marriage." John Finnis, for example, writes that for sex acts to be moral, they must have "unitive significance." He writes that:

sexual acts are not unitive in their significance unless they are marital (actualizing the all-level unity of marriage) and (since the common good of marriage has two aspects) they are not marital unless they have not only the generosity of acts of friendship but also the procreative significance, not necessarily of being intended to generate or capable in the circumstances of generating but at least of being, as human conduct, acts of the reproductive kind.

Finnis claims that "deliberately contracepted sex" within heterosexual marriage is not sex of the unitive, moral variety but instead is immoral.

The new natural law theorists' arguments have been countered by various scholars, such as Michael Perry, Andrew Koppelman, and Patrick Lee.

sex is always wrong, for example. Most, however, say that marital infidelity is always wrong and that they would not have sex with someone they did not love." Michael et al., supra note 320, at 233. One-third of the sample fell in the "traditional" category, and said "that their religious beliefs always guide their sexual behavior ... that homosexuality is always wrong... that premarital sex, teenage sex, and extramarital sex are wrong." Id. at 232-33.

Andrew Koppelman refers to the "new natural law theorists" as Germain Grisez, John Finnis, Gerard V. Bradley, and Robert P. George. Koppelman, Is Marriage Inherently Heterosexual?, supra note 21, at 52. Germain Grisez is not a legal scholar, but Finnis, Bradley, and George rely on him. For examples of their work, see Finnis, Law, Morality and "Sexual Orientation," supra note 293; Bradley & George, Marriage and the Liberal Imagination, supra note 293. Patrick Lee has written an article with Robert P. George, and he could be termed a new natural law theorist as well. See Lee & George, What Sex Can Be, supra note 293.

See Lee & George, What Sex Can Be, supra note 293, at 135.

Finnis, Law, Morality and "Sexual Orientation," supra note 293, at 1067; see also Bradley & George, Marriage and the Liberal Image, supra note 293, at 305.


See id. at 31.

See Perry, Morality of Homosexual Conduct, supra note 193.

Carlos Ball, Stephen Macedo, and Mary Becker. These scholars reject the notion that "deliberately contracepted sex" within marriage is immoral. They also reject the notion that sex between persons of the same gender is necessarily morally deficient.

Becker responds to the natural law theorists' idea that heterosexuality is inherently morally superior to homosexuality as follows: "[T]he conviction that heterosexuality is inherently morally superior to homosexuality is difficult to respond to because one either sees the moral superiority of noncontracepted heterosexual intercourse in marriage or one does not." While Wardle and others see the inherent moral superiority of noncontracepted heterosexual intercourse, others do not.

While the new natural law theorists' arguments are not overtly based on religion, various scholars have shown that they are religion-based. Carlos Ball argues, "despite . . . protestations, Finnis' arguments depend ultimately on theology-based notions that only sexual acts which are reproductive in nature can be inherently good." Richard Posner writes that Finnis "expound[s] an Orthodox Catholic view in a manner incomprehensible to the secular mind." According to Koppelman, bans on same-gender marriage should not be based on the "exceedingly contestable religious surmises" of the new natural law theorists. It is also significant that some religions besides

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566 See Ball, supra note 7.
567 See Macedo, Homosexuality and the Conservative Mind, supra note 293.
568 See Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7.
569 See Ball, supra note 7, at 1909–19; Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7, at 188; Koppelman, Is Marriage Inherently Heterosexual?, supra note 21, at 58–62; Macedo, Homosexuality and the Conservative Mind, supra note 293; Michael Perry, Morality of Homosexual Conduct, supra note 193, at 43.
570 See Ball, supra note 7, at 1909–19; Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7, at 188; Koppelman, Is Marriage Inherently Heterosexual?, supra note 21, at 58–62; Macedo, Homosexuality and the Conservative Mind, supra note 293; Michael Perry, Morality of Homosexual Conduct, supra note 193, at 43.
571 Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7, at 188.
572 Becker discusses the new natural law theorists' views in greater detail and argues that keeping marriage closed to same-gender couples, particularly lesbian couples, is on questionable moral grounds for a number of reasons, including that it narrows women's options. See id.
573 Ball, supra note 7, at 1912, 1918 (arguing that new natural law theorists give secular gloss to traditional but controversial Catholic theology); see also Perry, Morality of Homosexual Conduct, supra note 193, at 66 (noting that Finnis' position defends the "official" view of the Catholic church but that this is not the position of all Christians or all Catholics).
574 Posner, supra note 152, at 76.
575 See Koppelman, Is Marriage Inherently Heterosexual?, supra note 21, at 95.
Catholicism have different views on the issue of marriage between couples of the same gender; some religions welcome such unions.\textsuperscript{376}

Ball, importantly, makes clear that his disagreement with Finnis is not simply because his arguments are based in religion or morality: “Finnis is not incorrect because he incorporates arguments of morality and the good to defend his position that public policy should discourage homosexual conduct. Instead, Finnis is incorrect because his arguments are inconsistent, flawed and ultimately unpersuasive.”\textsuperscript{377} The effort to broaden access to marriage, far from repudiating morality, advances it by endorsing values and aspirations such as commitment, duties, fairness, and caring.\textsuperscript{378}

Wardle argues that gay men and lesbians have no basis for discrimination claims with respect to marriage, employment, or other areas because gay men and lesbians are defined by “sexual behavior.”\textsuperscript{379} Thus, to him, it is incorrect to speak of invidious discrimination against this group. He states, “the particular sexual behavior that defines the group seeking same-sex marriage entails uniquely high risks to public health and jeopardizes sexual integrity and social order more than most other sexual practices (incest and adultery are the most comparable behaviors).”\textsuperscript{380} First, lesbians actually have the lowest rate of sexually transmitted disease of any sexually active group.\textsuperscript{381} Second, the phrase “jeopardiz[ing] sexual integrity” is so vague as to be mysterious.\textsuperscript{382} Third, it is not clear what it is about gay sexual behavior that “jeopardizes . . . the social order.” Is it the fact that gay male and lesbian couples can not get married? Comparing the situation of gay male and lesbian couples who want to get married with adulterous sexual activity simply highlights the exclusion from marriage.\textsuperscript{383}

\textsuperscript{376} See supra notes 324--27 and accompanying text.

\textsuperscript{377} Ball, supra note 7, at 1912.

\textsuperscript{378} See REGAN, supra note 5, at 120; Ball, supra note 7, at 1938; Bartlett, Saving the Family from the Reformers, supra note 96, at 843; Cahn, Review Essay: The Moral Complexities of Family Law, supra note 96, at 237; McClain, supra note 7, at 121.

\textsuperscript{379} Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 756.

\textsuperscript{380} Id. at 756.

\textsuperscript{381} Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7, at 175.

\textsuperscript{382} Becker might agree that “jeopardizing sexual integrity” is bad, but may have a very different analysis of what that means. See Becker, Women and Morality, supra note 7, at 170. Becker argues that alienating, objectifying, autonomy-denying sex is normatively negative, and that such sex is more likely in heterosexual relationships than in lesbian relationships. Thus, she argues, it is bad for women to be restricted to heterosexual marriage. See id. This illustrates the vagueness of Wardle’s statement.

\textsuperscript{383} For discussion of the incest comparison, see supra notes 344--49.
Even more important is Wardle’s focus on the “sexual behavior that defines the group.” Wardle’s focus on “sexual behavior that defines the group” of gay men and lesbians interestingly mirrors the new natural law theorists’ focus on sexual acts outlined above. These opponents of marriage by same-gender couples seem to consider sexual activity to be of paramount importance. But it is inaccurate to say that lesbians and gay men are defined as unique by their sexual behavior, since practices such as oral sex are engaged in by both heterosexuals and homosexuals. Mark Strasser has argued that sexual orientation is distinct from sexual behavior, and that “sexual orientation does not merely involve a simple, easily identifiable behavior or tendency to perform such behavior, but instead is a vital part of one’s personality.” Defining lesbian couples and gay male couples seeking access to marriage only or even primarily by their sexual behavior is inaccurate and reductionistic. Such a definition ignores the “familistic” behavior that such couples engage in and overlooks the benefits of “belonging” that such couples may bring to society. It would be similarly inaccurate and reductionistic to define heterosexual marriage in a way that simply focused on “the particular type of [sexual] behavior that defines the group.” Marriage is about connection, interdependence and love, not simply sexual behavior.

CONCLUSION

Family law, and the law of marriage and divorce, have to a considerable extent become increasingly focused on individuals and their rights over the last forty years. Scholarship based on communitarian ideas has highlighted the trend toward atomism in family law and behavior. However, in important ways, the law of marriage has become more oriented toward mutual duties, and for the first time presents a

384 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 756.
385 See supra notes 362–63. Craig Christensen has noted that “[g]ay rights opponents have remained fixated on the sexual aspects of sexual orientation.” Christensen, If Not Marriage?, supra note 172, at 1783.
386 See Michael et al., supra note 320, at 140–41.
387 See Strasser, supra note 7, at 37–38. Strasser notes that “it would approach absurdity to suggest that only those who engage in sexual relations with the opposite sex are heterosexual. On such an account, individuals who refrained from having sexual relations, citing health or religious reasons, would seem to be neither heterosexual nor homosexual. . . . Individuals who wait until they marry before having sexual relations have a sexual orientation even if they have not yet been sexually active.” Id. at 37.
388 Id. at 40.
389 Wardle, Efforts to Legitimate, supra note 19, at 756; see Ball, supra note 7, at 1913.
model of mutual commitment, equality, and interdependence. Acknowledging scholars’ concerns about the atomization of law and society as significant and in some ways negative, the quest for marriage by same-gender couples can be seen as clearly positive. It is a striving toward connection, duty, and responsibility. The opposition to marriage by same-gender couples should be seen as undermining and attempting to sever important connections between people, and in turn fostering increased atomization. Allowing marriage by same-gender couples will be a step toward family law’s finding “ways to sing more clearly the melody of belonging.”

Hafen, Individualism and Autonomy, supra note 4, at 42.