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Introduction: For Better or for Worse? Relational Landscapes in the Time of Same-Sex Marriage¹

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ABSTRACT: As same-sex marriage has become a legal reality in a rapidly growing list of countries, the time has come to assess what this means for families and relationships on the ground. Many scholars have already begun to examine how marriage is helping some same-sex couples, but in this introduction I call for a broader and more critical research agenda. In particular, I argue that same-sex marriage crystallizes a key tension surrounding families and relationships in many contemporary societies. On the one hand, strict family norms are relaxing in many places, allowing more people to form more diverse types of caring relationships. On the other hand, some relationships continue to be more honored and protected than others. I frame the spread of same-sex marriage as an opportunity to study this tension, and I argue that queer critiques of marriage provide useful tools for helping ground such research. I argue for research

¹ Thank you to Joseph Nicholas DeFilippis, Rafael de la Dehesa, Minwoo Jung, and Abigail Ocobock for suggestions and feedback on earlier drafts of this paper.

that sees same-sex marriage not as an isolated shift in the status of some same-sex couples, but instead as embedded in broader “relational landscapes” where different relationships of different types intersect with each other and shape each other. Such research would highlight inequalities among married couples and between married and unmarried people, and it would trace changes in other relationship forms outside of same-sex marriage itself. I describe how the chapters in this volume pursue these goals, helping develop queer and other critiques of marriage to lay the groundwork for a contextualized, critical research program on families and relationships after same-sex marriage.

The spread of same-sex marriage is a landmark event in ongoing global histories of family. It carves a major change—a defining change, according to many—into the boundaries of an institution that dominates relational landscapes in most societies. As fierce debates give way to gender-neutral marriage laws in a rapidly growing list of countries, studying what comes next can teach us a lot about the ways marriage works as a social institution.

The promise is that same-sex marriage will make it possible to live a wider range of family lives. Most directly, it should make it easier for at least some LGBTQ² people to build the kind of

² Throughout this chapter and this volume, all authors use whatever variation on the LGBTQ umbrella is most appropriate to the people, movements, legal provisions, etc. being discussed at that moment. For example, here I use “LGBTQ” because a variety of LGBTQ-identified people

socially honored, couple-based households most straight people take for granted. But some advocates foresee—and opponents fear—a deeper transformation. They suggest that these new marriages, grounded more in gender similarity than difference, could help everyone develop new, more equal models for how to live as a married couple. Even more ambitiously, some hope—and again, others fear—that same-sex marriage will promote respect not just for different forms of marriage but for all the diverse types of relationships people build with one another.

Behind these hopes and fears lies the fact that same-sex marriage has emerged in contexts of increasing family and relational diversity. In the northern European countries that first legally recognized same-sex marriage in the early 2000s, unmarried cohabitation (i.e. “living together”) and registered partnerships have long been widespread, institutionalized alternatives to marriage (Andersson, 2017; Badgett, 2009). When South Africa legalized same-sex marriage in 2006, it did so five years after recognizing marriages that follow African legal customs, including polygamy (Stacey & Meadow, 2009; Yarbrough, 2015). In one of the most recent countries to move toward same-sex marriage, Taiwan, a key activist organization working on the issue frames it as part of a broader “Diverse Families” agenda that also includes unmarried partnerships and multi-partner households (Hsu, 2015). To be sure, family laws are still quite narrow in many countries with same-sex marriage, including the especially high-profile instance of the United States (Polikoff, 2008; Stacey & Meadow, 2009). But virtually all societies have

may be able to benefit from same-sex marriage rights, depending on their circumstances. But in the next paragraph I speak about the “gay and lesbian movement,” because that’s the best way to understand the target of the queer critique I am discussing there.

seen dramatic changes ripple through actual family and relational *practices* on the ground, outside official law, and same-sex marriage is intertwined with these trends (see, e.g., Brainer, 2017; Yarbrough, 2017).

With these ripples of change, previously disparaged relational practices—divorce, cohabitation, unmarried parenthood, same-sex coupling, and more—have become more common and at least somewhat less stigmatized than before. Even still, nowhere have these openings been limitless. Some relationships remain more recognized, more supported, more privileged—more *central*—than others. Some people get more leeway to make their own choices from the changing list of options, while the “choices” of queer, trans, and poor people and people of color remain watched, regulated, or punished. Even as relational landscapes³ become more diverse and

³ British family sociologist Carol Smart (2007) has used the term “relational landscapes” to describe how same-sex couples are embedded in broader social networks of friends, family, etc., whose own views on marriage and family shape whether same-sex couples want to marry, or whether they feel that they *can* marry while maintaining their friend and family connections. The term emphasizes that different relationship types don’t exist in isolation from each other, but instead that they interact within shared social fields. At the most concrete level, any given individual is simultaneously a part of multiple different relationship types and must negotiate how these interlock. At a more abstract level, the meanings and consequences of any particular relationship type are defined in part by how it is understood to compare to, and fit with, other relationship types. While a fully developed theory of relational landscapes would require more space than I have here, I find the term useful because it highlights the importance of these

more fluid, they nonetheless continue to be ordered in ways that elevate certain forms of caring, and certain people, over others.

Same-sex marriage offers an especially useful vantage point for studying this tension. On the one hand, it has *opened* a major change in the most important relationship recognized by most societies, diversifying family norms so dramatically that it often seems to symbolize family diversity itself. On the other hand, it has *channeled* that dramatic change...through the most important relationship recognized by most societies, powerfully ratifying the central role marriage still plays in ordering relational landscapes, even as they diversify.

To illuminate this broader tension between diversity and order in contemporary relational landscapes, it's not enough to study same-sex marriage as just an isolated change in the status of some same-sex couples. We must instead study it as practice that is emerging into, and out of, a broad range of complex social settings where all people sustain many different types of intertwined relationships. Much of how same-sex marriage plays out, even for married couples, will depend on how it interacts with other relationships, and it will in turn exert its own complex

interconnections, while leaving open the question of how any particular relational landscape is structured or how it may change over time. One can think of a relational landscape as a kind of terrain that people traverse over the course of their lives, where certain options and obligations appear in particular arrangements that are largely predetermined, from the perspective of an individual, but that can also change over historical time.

influences on them. In different ways, all the chapters collected in this volume adopt this contextualized perspective.

Insights through Exile: Queer Critiques of Marriage

There is a long tradition in queer scholarship and activism of looking at marriage in this contextualized way. As queer people, we have often been cast out of our families or have cut ties ourselves, unable or unwilling to squeeze our gendered and sexual selves into the narrow family roles expected of us. Marooned from mainstream kinship structures, we have created diverse “chosen families” of friends, neighbors, lovers, exes, and children on whom we depend for support and around whom we organize our lives (Ferguson, 2003; Stacey, 2004; Weston, 1991). These experiences have enabled us to see mainstream kinship norms *as* norms created and policed through relations of power, not as the natural laws they often claim to be (Warner, 1991).

Legions of us have mobilized this perspective by questioning the heterosexual definition of marriage, forcing the legal changes now spreading around the globe. Some of us, meanwhile, have questioned the institution of marriage itself. As mainstream lesbian and gay activism, especially in the U.S., began to focus on same-sex marriage in the 1990s, queer critics asked whether this was our most important goal, or even a desirable one. Lesbian feminist critiques underscored the ways marriage had historically subjugated one spouse to the other (Ettelbrick, 1989; see also Rubin, 2006), while sex-positive critiques highlighted marriage’s role in defining most sexual desires and practices as “immoral” (Warner, 1999; see also Rubin, 1998). Queer of

color critics emphasized how these gender and sexual norms radiated out from white, middle-class communities to police of families of color (Ferguson, 2003; Reddy, 1997).

Banished to the margins of relational landscapes, queer people had forged creative intimacies that resisted these gender, sexual, and racial hierarchies. What would happen to this resistance as we moved within the reach of marriage's surveilling light?

The worry was that marriage wouldn't simply be a neutral option for some LGBTQ people to "choose" while others didn't. Draped in prestige and privilege, marriage distributes major social and material benefits to those who marry while withholding them from those who don't. The crucial point running through many queer critiques of marriage was that the distribution and the withholding depend on each other. As Michael Warner (1999) put it with respect to marriage's symbolic qualities, "To a couple that gets married, marriage just looks ennobling.... Stand outside it for a second and you see the implication: if you don't have it, you and your relations are less worthy.... The ennobling and the demeaning go together" (p. 82). Similarly, the material benefits distributed through marriage are benefits precisely because they are denied to those outside of it. In other words, marriage doesn't just sit alongside other relationships, one option among many. Rather, it helps to *define* these other relationships as less than, carving inequality into relational landscapes.

Because of this, many queer critics expected that same-sex marriage rights would pull some LGBTQ people toward married coupledom while legitimizing continued discrimination against all people who, for whatever reason, don't marry. Perhaps the most fully developed account of

how that could happen came from scholar Lisa Duggan, who diagnosed a “*new homonormativity*” (2004, p. 50) in U.S. lesbian and gay politics in the mid-1990s. Duggan argued that the most prominent lesbian and gay writers and activists of the time “did not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions.” They aimed only to combat discrimination against same-sex couples, while leaving all other norms surrounding conventional relationships in place. Of particular importance, they accepted the assumption that a sharp boundary should separate the private sphere of family and sexuality from the public sphere of politics. This boundary has long been built through marriage in the white middle classes of North America and Western Europe (Lasch, 1977), constructing the married household as a private refuge at the center of human life, led by a male head who represented the household’s interests in public. Duggan argued that homonormative advocates were effectively offering a bargain built around this public/private boundary: If you let gays into marriage, then we’ll go there and keep quiet. Representing themselves as the gay mainstream, these voices “worked to position ‘liberationists’ and leftists as irresponsible ‘extremists’ or as simply anachronistic,” discrediting queer calls for a more fundamental transformation of the prevailing relational order. Duggan thus located the engine of normalization in the political struggle over same-sex marriage itself, arguing that segments of the LGBTQ populace who were ideologically and institutionally closest to ruling elites framed the agenda for LGBTQ justice in a narrow way that disturbed the status quo as little as possible. She similarly located normalization’s consequences primarily in the political sphere, analyzing same-sex marriage campaigns as a key example of a broader politics that used diversity rhetoric to legitimize economic agendas aimed at cutting public support for social welfare, in this case by shifting more of that burden onto private, married families.

Queer critiques of marriage thus focused on the ways marriage helped regulate and assign value to *all* relationships, both married and not. Duggan's critique in particular traced how this role for marriage was grounded in intertwined legal, political, economic, and cultural structures. Now, as same-sex marriage becomes legal, these critiques offer crucial resources to help us study the inequalities and power relations structuring relational landscapes even as they become more fluid and diverse.

Happily, research is already emerging on how families are changing in the aftermath of same-sex marriage. To take one early line of this research, several studies suggest that same-sex couples who marry may enjoy stronger health outcomes than those who don't. For example, early research suggests that for lesbians and gay men, being in a legally recognized partnership might be associated with better self-reported health (Reczek, Liu, & Spiker, 2017), more consistent doctor's visits and access to health insurance (Elwood, et al., 2017), lower stress levels (Riggle, Rostosky, & Horne, 2010), and lower use of alcohol (Reczek, Liu, & Spiker, 2014).⁴ These

⁴ Some of the studies in this line of research focus specifically on marriage, while others focus on any legally recognized partnership. Similarly, some studies use unmarried couples as the comparison group and others use all unmarried people. Also, not all of the results mentioned here were found to be statistically significant. One complicating factor at this stage of the scholarship is that reliable quantitative measures are still in development, in part because there has been a very complex mix of legal and social recognition for same-sex couples in recent years as same-sex marriage has been actively contested.

findings generally echo a long line of research finding health differences between married and unmarried different-sex couples, although in some studies the health associations with marriage are weaker for same-sex couples, or play out differently for gay male versus lesbian couples (e.g., Reczek et al., 2017).

These are important early findings with the potential to teach us a lot. But they can teach us even more when viewed through queer critiques of marriage. For example, queer critiques remind us that the health advantages enjoyed by married couples represent, by definition, disadvantages for the unmarried. The obvious question follows: what is it about marriage that drives this inequality? To be sure, family scholars researching both different- and same-sex marriage have already spent much time on this question. Possible answers include the gendered care wives take to look after their husbands' health but that unmarried partners do less of (Umberson, 1992), or the material benefits that flow to married couples, which in the U.S. often include health insurance (Ash & Badgett, 2006; Ponce, et al., 2010). Another possibility is that marriage doesn't make people healthier, but instead that healthier people are more likely to get and stay married in the first place (Waldron, Hughes, & Brooks, 1996). Research on married same-sex couples will certainly advance this debate. But critical queer perspectives on marriage remind us that *all three* possibilities presume an underlying relational landscape tilted in favor of marriage. When caring relationships can take many forms, what is it that makes *marriage* the price of admission to health-promoting supports, whether in the form of intimate care or of legal benefits? And what is it that makes that price higher for those who are less healthy in the first

place? Truly open and equal relational landscapes are impossible without answers to questions like these.

What I am suggesting here is that critical queer perspectives on marriage can deepen our analysis of the data now emerging on married same-sex couples, by pushing us to identify and theorize the institutional, economic, cultural, legal, and political factors that help produce the inequalities we observe in and around marriage. This sort of critical intervention has improved family social science in the past, when feminist scholarship revolutionized the study of gender inequalities in marriage by placing those inequalities in their broader social contexts. For example, consider scholarship on the link between marriage and household labor. On average, women in different-sex relationships do much more household labor than men, and this is especially true when the couple is married rather than living together outside of marriage (Davis, Greenstein, & Gerteisen Marks, 2007). Why is this pattern worse in marriage? One of the most influential early theories came from economist Gary Becker (1981) who suggested the reason was that marriage provided a kind of insurance that allowed each spouse to “specialize” either in paid work outside the home, or in unpaid housework. When both partners specialize, he argued, things are more efficient overall because each person gets better at their respective job. But, he suggested, this is risky for the housework-focused partner without the promise of marriage. Marriage lowers the likelihood that their partner will leave them, and Becker argued that this allowed them to focus on housework and the couple as a whole to reap the benefits of efficiency.

Becker's theory launched a long line of research, but feminist critics pointed out that it has a massive empirical problem. By itself it cannot explain why *wives*, specifically, almost always end up on the housework side of the marital bargain. After all, women do much more housework than men even when they're cohabiting, even in married couples where both spouses work for pay, even in married couples where the wife earns *more* (Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, & Matheson, 2003). Something beyond a simple bargain between spouses must explain this large and consistent gender inequality. Ideologies linking different types of work to different gender and family roles are one possible explanation (Davis & Greenstein, 2009; Legerski & Cornwall, 2010). Another possibility is that, because women earn less on average for paid work as compared to men, the wife has less bargaining power when a married couple divides up the housework. Whatever the explanation, feminist scholars have shown how one of the most fundamental inequalities of marriage can only be understood by analyzing marriage within the broader ideological, economic, political, and legal contexts that create marriage and shape how it plays out in practice.

Same-sex marriage obviously represents an excellent opportunity to further advance our understanding of housework inequalities in marriage (Schultz & Yarbrough, n.d.; Widiss, 2012). But my main point here is even broader. Just as feminist critiques fundamentally reshaped marriage scholarship by analyzing married families in their ideological and structural context, queer critiques can help us view the advantages associated with marriage in a wider frame. They can help us think about the differences not just between married and unmarried couples but between married couples and all other forms of committed caring, from siblings raising children

together to close friends living as roommates to polyamorous relationships. Moreover, queer critiques can help us see the differences between married couples and everyone else not just as differences but as *hierarchies* where the benefits of marriage flow from its elevated legal and social status. In same-sex marriage we have a unique opportunity to better understand how these hierarchies are built, and in queer critiques we have a crucial set of tools for doing so.

Overview of the Volume

The chapters in this volume take up this opportunity, using queer and other critiques of marriage to examine the shifting contours of relational inequality after same-sex marriage. As described more fully in the preface, this volume is part of a three-volume collection exploring the impact of same-sex marriage rights on LGBTQ relationships, activism, and political priorities. All three volumes are based on a conference titled, “After Marriage: The Future of LGBTQ Politics and Scholarship,” which was organized by CLAGS: The Center for LGBTQ Studies and held at John Jay College of Criminal Justice (CUNY) in New York City on October 1-2, 2016. The volumes in this collection gather scholarly essays presented at the conference, interviews with activist speakers, and transcripts from key conference panels to help carry the conference debates to a broader audience.

In this volume, the core debate asks: with the spread of same-sex marriage, are relational landscapes opening up to a more diverse range of caring relationships? Or are they instead continuing to channel relational life in normative directions, whether heteronormative or

homonormative? The voices collected here reach different conclusions about this debate, but they all take the question seriously, and their analyses all include frameworks drawn in part from queer theory and activism. In doing so, they also further develop these frameworks, beginning to specify how their parameters apply to concrete relational experiences playing out on the ground.

The volume is organized in three sections. The first section begins with the material consequences of marriage and legal regulation in the daily lives of queer families. In chapter 1, Luciana Moreira's research among women in lesbian relationships in Madrid suggests that these consequences can be complex and uneven. She finds that, although Spanish law has recognized same-sex marriage and same-sex parents for over a decade, persistent heteronormative assumptions haunt her interviewees' interactions with families of origin and government bureaucracies, limiting the law's impact. In chapter 2, Liz Montegary also finds uneven material effects of marriage, in this case because the law itself triggers very different financial consequences for rich and poor same-sex couples in the U.S., to the advantage of the former. An interview with Canadian researcher and activist Rachel Epstein closes the section in chapter 3. Epstein shares some of her current research, which shows how the Canadian legal system has a hard time understanding conflicts that emerge out of queer and trans families whose structure doesn't fit normative assumptions. All three chapters show how the material consequences of marriage and family law reflect enduring norms, making life difficult for those who don't fit them.

The second section focuses squarely on the question of whether marriage is pulling queer relationships in a more normative direction. The debate begins in chapter 4 with Abigail Ocobock's extensive interview research among LGB people in Massachusetts, the first U.S. state to legalize same-sex marriage. Ocobock finds that many who expressed queer critiques of marriage before it became legal now suppress or soften their criticism. Sociologist Mignon Moore offers a different take in chapter 5, where she reflects on her research and on her own family's experiences as a Black, married, lesbian couple with children moving across different social spaces in New York City. Moore is skeptical of the queer critique of marriage, arguing that the legitimacy conferred by marriage has opened space for her to express her family life openly, especially in Black communities such as the socially conservative church where she grew up. In chapter 6, Lwando Scott takes a middle position in this debate, arguing that his research among married same-sex couples in South Africa shows that these couples both reinforce and disrupt existing family norms. To close the section in chapter 7, Lital Pascar analyzes media representations of consensual non-monogamous relationships, arguing that some advocates from within this community are consciously developing "polynormative" strategies based on homonormative strategies from the same-sex marriage debate in order to win social legitimacy, and possibly marriage rights, for poly relationships.

Pascar's chapter on poly relationships serves as a bridge to the final section, which expands outward from the normalization debate to consider how a diverse range of intimacies beyond same-sex marriage are playing out today as same-sex marriage spreads. The section opens in chapter 8 with a full reprint of the foundational "Beyond Same-Sex Marriage" statement issued

in 2006 by a team of critical activists and scholars. This statement challenged the U.S. gay and lesbian movement's focus on same-sex marriage, arguing for a broader legal framework supporting not just different kinds of marriage but also unmarried partnerships, close friend relationships, adult children caring for parents, and more. The chapter includes transcribed remarks from several of the statement's authors on its continued relevance today, drawn from a panel at the "After Marriage" conference reflecting on the statement's legacy. Four chapters looking at examples of specific non-normative, non-same-sex-marriage relationships and communities follow. Chapter 9 begins with an interview with activist, artist, and writer, Ignacio Rivera. Rivera celebrates the diverse poly, kink, and other relationships and communities that make up their life, and thinks that marriage will do little to help these communities thrive further. Chapter 10 turns back to marriage with Shuzhen Huang's research on *xinghun* marriages in China, in which a lesbian and a gay man marry each other. Huang sees these as relationships of creative resistance, arguing that they open space for Chinese queer people to combine same-sex romance with family obligations. In chapter 11, the Scarborough Family, an intentional family of 7 adults and 3 children living together in Hartford, Connecticut, relates how their wealthy neighbors—including two married same-sex couples—tried to use zoning laws to push them out of the neighborhood. Finally, Theodore Greene's research in chapter 12 traces how recent conflicts around queer youth of color hanging out in Chicago's Boystown neighborhood reflect, among other things, a tension between the growing homonormative family norms of the white, middle-class gays who dominate the area and the "queer street family" model of public interpersonal care that the youth construct for themselves. The section and the volume close with excerpts from a key panel at the "After Marriage" conference, titled "Where Do We Go From

Here? Future Fronts in the Battle for Family Diversity.” In this chapter, scholars, lawyers, activists, and journalists gather to consider different legal and political approaches that could support truly open relational landscapes.

Toward a Queer Research Agenda on Relationships After Marriage

Collectively, all the chapters engage queer critiques of marriage to suggest directions for research on families after same-sex marriage. Regarding the volume’s core debate, several chapters do suggest that marriage is channeling LGBTQ people toward more normative forms of relational life. For example, Abigail Ocobock finds that her interviewees now see marriage not as a public issue but instead as a private choice, and that this is narrowing the ways people talk about it. Similarly, Lital Pascar finds that non-monogamous people arguing for multi-partner marriage rights are attempting to distance themselves from negative stereotypes of non-monogamy, much as same-sex marriage advocates did with negative stereotypes of LGBTQ people before them. The Scarborough Family tell how their neighbors actively tried to force them out of the neighborhood because their family did not fit the married couple model. Similarly, Theodore Greene shows how predominantly white, middle-class residents of Boystown see queer youth of color’s street families as a threat, and attempt to mobilize police against them. Liz Montegary also argues that marriage is benefiting advantaged gays to the detriment of disadvantaged queer people, as wealthy gay couples strategize around marriage to minimize their tax payments while poor queer people struggle to maintain their eligibility for social services. The reflections by the original drafters of the “Beyond Same-Sex Marriage”

statement discuss, among other things, how the legalization of same-sex marriage has been accompanied in some places by the retraction of legal recognition for domestic partnerships and other non-marital family forms.

At the same time, several chapters emphasize the ways LGBTQ people continue to disrupt mainstream family norms today. For example, while Ignacio Rivera criticizes the mainstream lesbian and gay movement's heavy focus on marriage, they also see enduring relational creativity in the kink and polyamorous communities they inhabit. Similarly, Luciana Moreira's research highlights the diverse intimate and community relationships her participants form to survive the "slow violence" of cisheterosexism they still face today after same-sex marriage. While Theodore Greene's chapter highlights the pressures placed on queer youth's street families, he also finds that these families remain effective and vibrant support structures even as marriage spreads among older, wealthier gays and lesbians. Shuzhen Huang's research on *xinghun* marriage offers a particularly interesting case of disruption, as discourses of LGBTQ rights and same-sex marriage meet existing Chinese family norms to produce a new type of marriage that looks conventionally heterosexual from the outside but operates very differently on the inside. Meanwhile, two chapters argue that disruption is occurring even within married same-sex couples. Lwando Scott finds that same-sex spouses in Cape Town, South Africa are almost inadvertently creating a diverse and unpredictable range of twists on traditional family relationships as they take on roles, including vis-a-vis children, that don't fit existing norms for people of their gender. Mignon Moore, meanwhile, argues that her and her family's mere

presence disrupts norms—but in different ways in different spaces, because family norms differ across social contexts.

I see this range of responses more as a difference of emphasis than as a fundamental disagreement. None of the chapters see *only* normalization or *only* disruption in the contexts they study. Rather, all see some sort of combination. This is in line with findings from previous research (see Bernstein & Taylor, 2013). However, where previous scholars have contrasted these nuanced combinations against the most sweeping predictions of some queer critics, implying that the nuance proves the critics wrong, I would propose a different framing. While early research suggests that normalization of queer relationships is not total, it also rather consistently suggests that some degree of normalization *is* happening in perhaps every context same-sex marriage has touched. The real question, then, is not *whether* there is normalization, but instead *how much*, in what *forms*, and under what *conditions*.

Queer critiques are essential for pursuing these questions. At the same time, these critiques need further development in order to enable research sensitive to the different ways normalization plays out in different contexts (Ferguson, 2003). The chapters gathered here identify key themes to help ground that development. First, at the broadest level, several chapters emphasize that different communities value different norms about marriage, family, and relationships. The Scarborough Family's story is an especially clear example. When they lived in a working-class neighborhood, their neighbors easily accepted them. It was only when they moved into a previously abandoned mansion in Hartford's wealthiest neighborhood that their struggles began.

Similarly, Lital Pascar's analysis suggests that polynormative discourses emerge when non-monogamous people enter the broader public sphere, but that they are actively contested within poly communities themselves. This variation of family norms across social contexts is a central theme of Mignon Moore's chapter, which shows that the negative stereotypes she and her wife combat are very different when attending Moore's childhood church in Queens than when at their children's school in Manhattan. If relationship norms differ across communities, that means that different LGBTQ people embedded in different communities will face different kinds of normalizing pressures. Moreover, different communities themselves stand in complex and unequal relationships to each other. As queer of color critics have repeatedly emphasized (e.g., Ferguson, 2003; Muñoz, 1999), these points are crucial for understanding how hierarchies of race, class, religion, disability, and more intersect with sexual and gender expression to shape queer lives.

Second, and relatedly, many chapters emphasize that marriage is shaped not just by the law of the state but also by religion, culture, economic arrangements, daily practices, and more. At its heart, marriage is a creature of what law and society scholars call "legal pluralism" (Griffiths, 1986; Merry, 1988), a phenomenon that occurs when multiple legal systems, both formal and informal, regulate the same thing at the same time. The chapters collected here find widely varying relationships among legal and normative systems in the cases they study. For example, in Luciana Moreira's chapter, the cisheterosexual norms of the "straight mind" in Spain powerfully limit the same-sex marriage law's impact a decade after its enactment. For Abigail Ocobock, by contrast, social norms have *magnified* the law's impact. By observing etiquette

around their friends' weddings, former critics of marriage treat the legal debate as settled, and in this way help make the law itself a more settled feature of daily life. In Mignon Moore's chapter, she and her wife mobilize both the law and the social etiquette surrounding marriage to challenge heterosexist, patriarchal, and racist social norms in their communities. In Shuzhen Huang's chapter, Chinese law hasn't even changed to permit same-sex marriages, and strong kinship norms of parental obligation persist. Nonetheless, new desires generated by global LGBT social movements have helped inspire new forms of marriage among gays and lesbians. The "Beyond Marriage" and "Future Fronts in Family Diversity" panelists, meanwhile, see people creating new family forms that gallop ahead of law and norm alike.

This variation highlights that the social arrangements that produce marriage and its effects can be quite complex, and same-sex marriage provides a unique opportunity to study key features of these arrangements. In an important sense, same-sex marriage did not arrive with any specific court decision or legislative enactment. Rather, it began to arrive long ago in the daily practices and movement demands of some LGBTQ communities. Through a series of both private and public battles it has become more and more institutionalized in many places (see Cherlin, 1978; 2004), yet it often remains incompletely institutionalized today even in those places where it has become law. The chapters collected here thus push us to think about the legal enactment of same-sex marriage as one moment in longer, open-ended processes that vary from one social context to the next.

Finally, several chapters insist that queer people have continued to show agency and creativity in constructing their caring relationships, even as the pressures they face have changed. Lwando Scott describes how married same-sex spouses in Cape Town deploy traditional relationship terms like “mother” and “friend” in new ways. Rachel Epstein relates how queer and trans families create complex relationships beyond what the law can comprehend. Ignacio Rivera celebrates the affirming play with gender and sexuality found in kink and poly communities. The Scarborough Family fights back against local political and economic elites who are also their neighbors, winning broad political support for their non-conventional family. Chinese queers develop and start to culturally institutionalize a new, queer form of marriage. Queer street families build space for young people of color in wealthy, predominantly white gay neighborhoods. Again and again throughout the volume, queer people do what they can to sculpt new forms into the relational landscapes around them. While critical perspectives on marriage have understandably focused more on the structural forces that pressure people’s relational lives, a diverse range of evidence reminds us that these relational lives are lived on a daily and intimate scale that is hard for macro forces to fully colonize. This was true before same-sex marriage and it will remain true, in different ways and to different degrees for different people in different contexts, after it. The task for a critical scholarship of relational life after marriage is not to deny that these spaces of agency and change exist, but to understand what makes them possible so that we may, in this changed and changing landscape, expand them.

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