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**SOCIAL REALIGNMENT ON THE RIGHT**  
**ARE CONSERVATIVES NOW SUPPORTING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE?**

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## ABSTRACT

The position of same-sex marriage in the United States is seen by many as the civil rights struggle of the twenty first century. Though the confrontation between supporters and opponents of same-sex marriage used to be divided by ideology; anno 2014, support is to be found on both sides of the political aisle. Consequently, this has moved the debate away from the classic confrontation between progressives and conservatives. More interesting today is the debate within political – and ideological – conservatism. Using the narratives of media pundits S.E. Cupp, Glenn Beck, and Ann Coulter, Congresswomen Michele Bachmann, former Vice-President Dick Cheney and GOP affiliated organizations Log Cabin Republicans and GOProud, the reader is presented an overview of the dominant arguments on the right. A thorough analysis of these narratives in comparison to both each other and scholarly literature, serves as the argumentation to determine whether same-sex marriage is causing a realignment on the right. Ultimately, this not only begs the question as to how the institution of marriage ought to be defined, it also gives an insight on how American conservatism should be understood within contemporary society.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ACU	American Conservative Union
CPAC	Conservative Political Action Committee
DOMA	Defense of Marriage Act
FMA	Federal Marriage Amendment
FRC	Family Research Council
GSS	General Social Survey
LCR	Log Cabin Republicans
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender
RNC	Republican National Convention

## INTRODUCTION

*“Historically speaking, marriage has been a limited right, reserved for a few. It was not available to slaves prior to the Civil War, many immigrants during the Progressive Era, or same-sex couples today.”*<sup>1</sup> This statement, issued by political scientist Priscilla Yamin, emphasizes the historical position of marriage as a political construct, as an institution that is, even though opponents of same-sex marriage do not like to recognize it, open for change. Two centuries ago, interracial marriage was an issue unheard of, an idea that would have sounded preposterous to both progressives and conservatives. Yet, today, interracial marriage is just part of marriage – in other words, the definition has changed. As Yamin mentions, the issue under scrutiny in the beginning of the twenty-first century concerns marrying two people of the same sex.

In the spring of 2014, roughly eighteen years after President Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) into law, eighteen states already issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples, and an nineteenth – Illinois – will join this group on June 1, 2014.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, a provisional peak in the fight for same-sex marriage was reached on June 26, 2013, when the Supreme Court overturned DOMA’s section three in *United States v. Windsor*.<sup>3</sup> Especially in the last few years, it seems as if the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights movement has been on a ‘winning streak’. However, those who have followed the fight preceding each and every one of the LGBT movement’s victories will know the process of legalizing same-sex marriage in the United States is everything but a bagatelle. It is undeniable though, that the present-day LGBT movement finds itself in a more comfortable position than it has ever been in. Indeed, the LGBT movement started as an underground subculture in the *sixties* and *seventies*. Activists were not cared about by the rest of society and mainly associated with deviant behavior and, from the 1980s onwards, AIDS. Whenever LGBT activists neared a potential preliminary victory, opposing forces in society

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<sup>1</sup> P. Yamin, *American Marriage: A Political Institution*, Philadelphia (PA), University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> As of May 20, 2014, following states perform same-sex marriage: California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont and Washington. Same-sex marriage is also legal in the District of Columbia and under eight tribal jurisdictions.

<sup>3</sup> The Defense of Marriage Act was enacted on September 21, 1996 and consisted of three sections. The important one here is Section 3 which defined marriage – *“In determining the meaning of any Act of Congress, or any ruling, regulation, or interpretation of the various administrative bureaus and agencies of the United States, the word ‘marriage’ means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word ‘spouse’ refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife.”* On June 26, 2013, the Court upheld DOMA’s section two which left the issue to determine the legal boundaries of marriage to the states.



tried to silence or discredit them. As Southern Baptist singer Anita Bryant discovered in the late 1970s, such a strategy only worked for a while. Although Bryant led a successful campaign for the repeal of a gay rights ordinance in Miami in 1977, she could not help making LGBT rights a national issue.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, Bryant would not be the only one to adopt such a tactic. Opposition to the acknowledgement of LGBT rights was located on both sides of the political aisle, culminating in wide bipartisan support for the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act. Several states followed suit and installed statutory amendments banning same-sex marriage. At the same time, a smaller number of states started providing benefits to same-sex couples or were even recognizing so-called civil unions or domestic partnerships. Undoubtedly, opponents of same-sex marriage feared this might pave the way for the legalization of same-sex marriage; a fear they saw confirmed when the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruled in *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* that same-sex couples had the right to marry. Following this decision, President George W. Bush, pressured by the social conservatives within his own party, called for a Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA). The FMA he endorsed on February 24, 2004 would not only outlaw same-sex marriage in the United States, but also prevent ‘activist courts’ from forcing same-sex marriage upon the people.<sup>5</sup> Subsequent debates in Congress not only revealed a change in public opinion, but more importantly, an ideological and partisan split on the issue. The reader presuming this meant an abrupt shift of the liberal and Democratic position would be mistaken. Whereas it is certainly true that the core of what would become broad-based support for the LGBT cause was localized within these demographic and partisan groups, one should not forget that only a minority of the population (29.6%) then favored the legalization of same-sex marriage.<sup>6</sup> Beginning in certain subgroups,

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<sup>4</sup> D.K. Williams, “Sex and the Evangelicals. Gender Issues, the Sexual Revolution, and Abortion in the 1960s” In A.R. Schäfer (ed.), *American Evangelicals and the 1960s*, Madison (WI), University of Wisconsin Press, 2013, p. 113.

<sup>5</sup> Archived Article CNN: *Bush calls for ban on same-sex marriages* (February 25, 2004) [retrieved from Internet Archive on March 23, 2014].

<sup>6</sup> Data material used in this dissertation, unless signaled otherwise, is derived from the General Social Survey. GSS is a survey run by the National Opinion Research Center, headquartered at the University of Chicago. The author uses these data for three reasons. First of all, GSS analyses on a regular basis thousands of respondents whom they provide a survey dealing with a broad range of topics. It is, with the exception of the US Census, the most frequently analyzed source providing social data. Moreover, GSS already polled the public opinion on same-sex marriage in 1988, well before other organizations started doing so. Secondly, GSS data is frequently used in sociological research dealing with the position and acceptance of same-sex marriage. Using the same data allows the author to refer to conclusions based on these data, as well as to contribute to the ongoing debate. The statements relevant for this paper were ‘Homosexuals should have the right to marry’ and ‘think of self as liberal or conservative’. Regarding the former statement, respondents were provided six options: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) disagree, (5) strongly disagree, (6) cannot choose. Given that the respondents choosing option 6 were negligible, GSS data used in this dissertation only include answers 1 – 5. Unless indicated otherwise, answers 1 and 2 are taken together and referred to as ‘supporting/favoring same-sex marriage’. The same goes for answers 4 and 5 that were taken together to represent the percentage of the surveyed opposing same-sex marriage. Regarding the latter statement – political ideology – respondents were given eight options: (1) extremely liberal, (2) liberal, (3) slightly liberal, (4) moderate, (5) slightly conservative, (6) conservative, (7) extremely conservative, (8) do not know. Given that the respondents choosing option 8 were negligible, GSS data used

opposition to the idea of same-sex marriage began to fade.<sup>7</sup> However, the dominant environment would remain predominantly hostile, and state constitutions were amended to ban same-sex marriage. Before moving on to this dissertation's research question and structure, two crucial moments will be discussed. Since *Goodridge* in 2003, the LGBT movement had seen no real progress and had suffered one massive blow with the FMA – although the amendment ultimately failed to pass. Two events in 2008 turned the tide for the LGBT movement and started what I described earlier as their 'winning streak'. The first one was the formation of a Congressional caucus – the LGBT Equality Caucus. On June 4, Democratic representatives Tammy Baldwin (WI) and Barney Frank (MA) announced the establishment of a caucus representing “*different races, different genders, different sexual orientations, different geographic regions, different generations and different parties [sharing] a common mission: to promote lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) equality.*”<sup>8</sup> Despite the bipartisan claim, only two of the founding members were Republicans – Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (FL) and Chris Shays (CT). A few months later, the Connecticut Supreme Court handed down a decision in *Kerrigan v. Commissioner of Public Health*, making the Constitution State the second state in the Union to allow same-sex marriage. The other crucial moment occurred two years later. On August 11, 2010, CNN released the first opinion poll showing a majority of respondents favoring the legalization of same-sex marriage. The question ‘Do you think gays and lesbians should have a constitutional right to get married and have their marriage recognized by law as valid?’ was posed to 496 respondents between August 6 and August 10. Despite a +/- 4.5% sampling error, 52% of the respondents answered ‘yes’ to the question posed. Although previous opinion polls – conducted on a regular basis by a variety of institutions, TV networks and newspapers – showed a plurality in favor of same-sex marriage, this result exposed an ongoing trend confirmed by later opinion polls. Indeed, in 2010, General Social Survey (GSS) polling found a plurality of 46.6% supporting same-sex marriage – 40.3% opposed it. Deconstructing the results, it became clear that as many people ‘strongly disagreed’ with the statement that homosexuals should have the right to marry as there were people that ‘agreed’ with the statement (25%). Given that ‘strongly disagree’ still trumped ‘strongly agree’ (polling at 21.4%), one could wrongly presume that the anti-same-sex marriage opinion was still dominant. Essentially, the dominant opposing group had a stronger vision on the issue than the dominant supporting group; however, taking into account all data shows that altogether less people opposed same-sex marriage than

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in this dissertation only include answers 1 – 7. Unless indicated otherwise, answers 5 – 7 are taken together to represent the ‘conservative’ opinion. The third reason is the number of respondents. Whereas several media outlets conduct opinion polls themselves – showing the same trends – the number of respondents tends to be significantly smaller than the 2,000 – 3,000 respondents GSS interviews.

<sup>7</sup> D.M. **Baunach**, “Decomposing Trends in Attitudes Toward Gay Marriage, 1988 – 2006” In: *Social Science Quarterly*, 92 (2011), 2, p. 359.

<sup>8</sup> Press release: *House Members form LGBT Equality Caucus* (June 4, 2008) [retrieved from website LGBT Equality Caucus on March 3, 2014].

there were supporters.<sup>9</sup> Even though ‘strongly disagree’ remained the dominant opposing group in 2012, alternative polling data show that, along the rising support for same-sex marriage, even the strongest opponents are decreasing in number, leveling out the difference between regular and strong opposition.<sup>10</sup> In May 2013, a Pew research poll even found only 19% ‘strongly opposing’ the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, making it the smallest group of respondents.<sup>11</sup> Similar numbers were confirmed by Pew in February 2014, founding an all-time high of 54% supporting same-sex marriage.<sup>12</sup> This number was surpassed only a month later by a new high of 59%, according to a *Washington Post-ABC News* Poll.<sup>13</sup>

Given these significant numbers, one could wonder as to why marriage is still a hot issue, and more specifically, why same-sex marriage is seen as the civil rights struggle of the twenty-first century? As mentioned above, 2004 turned out to be a watershed moment. Conservatives and progressives split ways, and Republicans used same-sex marriage as a national agenda issue in George W. Bush’s re-election campaign. During the Republican National Convention (RNC), the GOP adopted a new stance on same-sex marriage explicitly endorsing the president’s call for a FMA several months earlier.<sup>14</sup> By doing so, they were able to portray that the Democratic Party was not on the side of tradition, thus defining opposition to same-sex marriage as a conservative priority. By framing it that way, the Republican Party tried to create the GOP/conservative/anti-same-sex marriage troika, which appealed to certain groups of people – enough to secure the White House for another four years. Yet, those groups were shrinking fast and today, a clear majority of the American people favors same-sex marriage. Several people on the political right have reacted to these developments by calling upon what can be seen as a conservative narrative. As it goes when you try to divide roughly three hundred and twenty million people into two ideologies over one issue, you get different opinions within at least one ideology. Given the RNC’s attempt to create a troika linking conservative and opposition to same-sex marriage, it should be no surprise

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<sup>9</sup> Polling 2010 – Homosexuals should have the right to marry. (1) strongly agree – 21.4%, (2) agree – 25%, (3) neither agree nor disagree – 13.2%, (4) disagree – 15.1%, (5) strongly disagree – 25.5%

<sup>10</sup> In 2012, GSS found a plurality of 25.1% ‘strongly agreeing’ with the statement. Altogether, a plurality of 49.6% thought homosexuals were entitled the right to marry.

Given the large scale of GSS surveys, they are conducted biannually – thus, they are conducted at the moment this dissertation was written. To constitute more recent trends, polling data from alternative sources will be used. In accordance with an earlier note, any source not being GSS will be signaled to the reader in order to prevent ambiguity.

<sup>11</sup> Other answers were ‘strongly favor’ (21%), ‘favor’ (30%) and oppose (22%).

<sup>12</sup> Support is to be understood as a combination of the respondents answering ‘strongly favor’ (24%) and ‘favor’ (30%) to the question “Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?”

<sup>13</sup> Support is to be understood as a combination of the respondents answering ‘strongly support’ (39%) and ‘support’ (20%) to the question “Overall, do you support or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?”

<sup>14</sup> D.L. Lucas, “Same-Sex Marriage in the 2004 election” In: C.A. Rimmerman and C. Wilcox (eds.), *The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage*, Chicago & London, The University of Chicago Press ltd., 2007, p. 253 – 254.

to anyone that the political right is torn apart over the issue. Politicians, pundits and interest groups on the right are all claiming to defend the ‘true’ conservative line. Yet, their defense of distinct positions makes it hard to see the wood for the trees. Throughout this dissertation, I will guide the reader through this amalgam of opinions, providing him with an answer as to where conservatives these days stand – or as the title of this dissertation reads: are conservatives now supporting same-sex marriage?<sup>15</sup>

Before answering this question, another needs addressing; what defines a conservative? Given the scope of this dissertation, the reader will not be presented a complete analysis of philosophical conservative thinking, although a historical contextualization will not be lacking. Indeed, it is important to have a historical understanding of conservative thought, and more specifically, the molding of current conservative thinking to be able to understand the several narratives dealing with the issue of same-sex marriage – narratives that are all appealing to the ‘conservative ideology’. In the following chapter, the answer to this additional, though equally important, question will be provided by a coherent chronological narrative, guided by Alan Brinkley’s applauded 1994 review entitled *The Problem of American Conservatism*. Having answered this question, a third chapter will survey the position of three prominent conservative media figures offering their take on same-sex marriage. After legitimizing the choice for conservative pundit S.E. Cupp, radio-host Glenn Beck and author Ann Coulter, their opinions will be weighed and analyzed in a comparative perspective. Although analyzing speeches, quotes and statements has its value, it is my feeling comparing their positions to both each other’s as well as an academic perspective contributes a great deal to answering this dissertation’s principal question. A similar structure will be followed in the fourth chapter, the difference being that the opinions analyzed are affiliated with the Republican Party. This angle will further enrich the conclusions found in the third chapter given that the GOP is still seen as a beacon in the fight against same-sex marriage. Although the selection made will be legitimized in the chapter itself, it is important to stress that I have chosen to include two organizations, besides Congresswomen Michele Bachmann (R – MN) and former Vice-President Dick Cheney. I feel their struggle is emblematic for the conservative take on same-sex marriage, even though they do not belong to either the legislative or the executive branch.

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<sup>15</sup> I deliberately chose to ask whether conservatives support same-sex marriage, rather than to opt for the more neutral: “Where do conservatives stand on the issue of same-sex marriage?” Given that GSS data up until 2012 reveal that a majority of the respondents not defining themselves as moderates define themselves as conservative, and given that, according to the *Washington Post-ABC News* poll cited above, about 60% of Americans support same-sex marriage, it seems a mere fact that at least some conservatives have to support same-sex marriage. Moreover, following the conservative narrative regarding same-sex marriage in popular media, one can get the impression that the growing number of conservatives supporting same-sex marriage signals a conservative change on the issue, whereas poll numbers clearly show support for same-sex marriage among conservatives is scarce (but growing – according to the *Washington Post-ABC News* poll, conservative opposition to same-sex marriage has fallen from 68% in 2012 to 54% in 2014).

## CONSERVATIVES, WHO ARE THEY?

The persons and organizations discussed below have in common their self-acknowledgment as a conservative person or group. The GSS, Pew, CNN and other surveys mentioned above also base their definition of ‘conservative’ on their respondents defining themselves as such. Whereas this illustrates that most people have a general idea of what the term conservatism includes, it also illustrates that conservatism encompasses a broad range of opinions. Furthermore, only present-day political conservatism is considered here. Just as most other major ideologies, conservatism has a long philosophical tradition. In the case of conservatism, this tradition starts in the end of the eighteenth century, and although he did not coin the term, Edmund Burke is widely credited as its father.<sup>16</sup> However, over the past two centuries, his thought has been claimed by liberals, positivists, utilitarians, and even neo-Marxists before it was firmly adopted as the basis for modern conservatism by the mid-twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> However, just like any other major ideology, modern conservatism did not become an ideology with what Douglas Brinkley calls “*a secure and consistent internal structure.*”<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, attempts have been made to define modern day conservatism. Not surprisingly, definitions applicable to the present-day United States are rather broad. Indeed, as one of the two main political ideologies – libertarianism is not (yet) as prominent as either liberalism or conservatism – there is a need for the definition to encompass as broad a group of people as possible. A potential and broad definition could read as follows:

*“Conservatism is a philosophy that seeks to maintain and enrich societies characterized by respect for inherited institutions, beliefs and practices, in which individuals develop good character by cooperating with one another in primary, local associations such as families, churches and social groups aimed at furthering the common good in a manner pleasing to God.”*<sup>19</sup>

This definition is the full first paragraph under the lemma ‘conservatism’ in *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*. Therefore, one might presume this is the core definition of what American conservatism stands for in the twenty-first century. However, it misses the historical evolution of

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<sup>16</sup> F. O’Gorman, “Volume II: Edmund Burke” In G. Parry (ed.) *Political Thinkers*, London, Routledge, 2004, p. 170.

<sup>17</sup> P.J. Stanlis, “Burkean Conservatism” In B. Frohnen, J. Beer and J.O. Nelson (eds.), *American Conservatism: An Encyclopedia*, Wilmington (DE), ISI Books, 2006, p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> D. Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism” In: *The American Historical Review*, 99 (1994), 2, p. 414.

<sup>19</sup> B. Frohnen, “Conservatism” In B. Frohnen, J. Beer and J.O. Nelson (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 180.

American conservatism from the mid-twentieth century onwards. As mentioned above, at that time, Burke's thoughts and ideas were adopted as the basis for modern-day conservatism. Simultaneously, American presidential elections marked a watershed moment in the narrative of political conservatism. In reaction to the liberal presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson, the Republican Party rejected its liberal East Coast wing by nominating Arizona Sen. Barry M. Goldwater.<sup>20</sup> The difference between Goldwater and the previous Republican nominee – President Eisenhower – could not have been bigger, and his loss in the 1964 presidential election led many observers to believe his brand of conservatism had no future in the United States.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, his brand of conservatism temporarily damaged the GOP, but also managed to steer the party to the right of the political spectrum, thereby committing to the definition mentioned above. Contrarily to what many saw as the loss of Goldwater conservatism, Richard M. Nixon's victory in 1968 began capitalizing what Goldwater had started. Fierce opposition to the Civil Rights Act and Nixon's 'southern strategy' marked the start of the popularization of modern American conservatism – even though George Wallace's American Independent campaign prevented him from winning the conservative Deep South. Brinkley adds another crucial factor to this election. In his often cited and acclaimed essay *The Problem of American Conservatism*, Brinkley recounts the ties of modern-day conservatism with the American West.<sup>22</sup> Given that the article was published in 1994 and California turned blue as late as 1992, Brinkley can be excused for seeing the West as a conservative bulwark. Nonetheless, his argumentation sticks as long as it is applied to the historical evolution – Goldwater, Nixon and Reagan were all Westerners.

Even though the conservative powerbase later expanded to the whole Sunbelt – thus including the South – several other, more ideological, factors contributed to molding a modern-day understanding of American conservatism. Indeed, the Republican Party may have been successful in uniting the 'conservative American', but one should not forget the many branches of conservatism that can be part of the cited definition. Both popular and scholarly opinion have to acknowledge the numerous factions working within conservatism.<sup>23</sup> Historically, Goldwater's conservative coalition that emerged during the 1950s and 1960s revealed two major factions making up twenty-first century conservatism – traditionalism and libertarianism. It can be rightfully argued that the latter is a distinct category. Yet, libertarianism – at least a part of it – can be legitimately included in this historical evolution that took place since the mid-twentieth century. Indeed, libertarian

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<sup>20</sup> M.A. Jones, *The Limits of Liberty. American History 1607 – 1992*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 551.

<sup>21</sup> K. Phillips-Fein, "Conservatism: A State of the Field" In: *The Journal of American History*, 98 (2011), 3, p. 725.

<sup>22</sup> D. Brinkley, *art. cit.*, p. 417.

<sup>23</sup> J.E. Zelizer, "Reflections: Rethinking the History of American Conservatism" In: *Reviews in American History*, 39 (2010), 2, p. 371.

ideas have even been running through conservative thought since the pre-World War II era.<sup>24</sup> While the immediate postwar era saw a growing gap between the two ideologies – a gap that will always remain – anticommunist feelings drove them back together from the mid-1950s onwards.<sup>25</sup> Although the shared fear for a spread of communism in the United States did not reduce the differences between the traditionalism and libertarianism, it provided them with a shared platform; a platform that formed the basis for modern-day conservatism. This train of thought has been adopted by influential conservative philosopher Frank S. Meyer in the 1960s. Working as an editor for the conservative *National Review*, Meyer acknowledged that both traditionalists and libertarians have a different focus. The former emphasize morality and religion whereas the latter choose reason and freedom above all. Instead of focusing on the differences between the two distinct ideologies, Meyer chose to focus on what might unite them – anticommunism, opposition to the New Deal welfare state and an emphasis on the importance of the individual. Moreover, uniting these two ideologies was nothing new. Meyer argued he followed the example set by the founding fathers who had linked these principles of freedom and a moral organic order once before.<sup>26</sup> Just like them, Meyer preached freedom above all. Yet, fusing this together with the conservative creed of tradition and morality, “*citizens must use liberty to choose virtue [because] for virtue and morality to mean anything, they must be freely chosen.*”<sup>27</sup> Although many may remain skeptical, the historical narrative has consequently confirmed Meyer’s ‘fusionism’. More than is often acknowledged, the alleged inconsistency between freedom and reason (emphasized by libertarians) and tradition and virtue (stressed by traditionalists) was false. True, conservatism uniting traditionalists and libertarians has been pressured in due course. Libertarian opposition to the Vietnam War might had caused fusionism to disappear as a short-lived theory in the annals of history. Ultimately, Nixon’s ‘law and order’ campaign managed to unite both factions under the umbrella of conservatism; and Ronald Reagan managed to do the same while healing the Republican scars Watergate had caused. Often, Reagan is even treated as the most successful fusionist because he managed to balance the opposing factions within the conservative movement.<sup>28</sup> Undoubtedly, his charisma and the success of his supply-side economics gained him the trust of many traditionalists and libertarians, even though the latter were fairly well aware that Reagan was no faithful follower of their creed.<sup>29</sup> Yet, his support for monetarism, tax cuts and deregulation

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<sup>24</sup> D. Brinkley, *art. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>25</sup> J.E. Zelizer, *art. cit.*, p. 372.

<sup>26</sup> K. Smant, “Meyer, Frank S.” In B. Frohnen, J. Beer and J.O. Nelson (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 569 – 571.

<sup>27</sup> E.C. Pasour Jr, “Fusionism” and K. Smant, “Meyer, Frank S.” In B. Frohnen, J. Beer and J.O. Nelson (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 338 – 341; 569 – 571.

<sup>28</sup> J.E. Zelizer, *art. cit.*, p. 372.

<sup>29</sup> E.J. Dionne Jr., *Why Americans Hate Politics*, New York (NY), Simon & Schuster, 2004, p. 280.

seemed to outweigh his 'big government' showdown with the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup> Support for fusionism seemed in decline in the 1990s, yet it revived in the beginning of the twenty first century. In 2006, another *National Review* editor – Jonathan H. Adler – felt obliged to recount what fusionism actually stood for, quoting fusionism as “*the belief in virtue as the end of men’s being implicitly recognizes the necessity of freedom to choose that end.*”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Adler distilled seven crucial elements upon which American conservatism is based:

*“(1) The existence of an objective moral order based on ontological foundations; (2) the primary reference for political thought and action is the individual, not the collective; (3) anti-utopianism; (4) the limitation of government power; (5) opposition to state control of the economy; (6) firm support [sic.] for the Constitution of the United States as originally conceived; (7) anti-communism.”*<sup>32</sup>

Fusionism as understood by Meyer was not only recounted by fellow editors at the *National Review*. Several scholars such as Julian Zelizer and E.J. Dionne either acknowledged or even adopted Meyer’s theory.<sup>33</sup> However, support did not remain limited to scholars and academics. In a 2009 speech at the Washington-based Hudson Institute, Congressman Paul Ryan (R – WI) made one off the most recent arguments for fusionism, proving its vitality within present-day American conservatism:

*“A ‘libertarian’ who wants limited government should embrace the means to his freedom: thriving mediating institutions that create the moral preconditions for economic markets and choice. A ‘social issues’ conservative with a zeal for righteousness should insist on a free market economy to supply the material needs for families, schools, and churches that inspire moral and spiritual life. In a nutshell, the notion of separating the social from the economic issues is a false choice. They stem from the same root.”*<sup>34</sup>

Despite its defining characteristics and broad support, fusionism seems to exclude one crucial issue defining American conservatism. Indeed, ever since conservatism gained prominence as an ideology, it has had a religious component as well. Given the ubiquity of religion throughout the

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<sup>30</sup> J.E. **Zelizer**, *art. cit.*, p. 372.

<sup>31</sup> J.H. **Adler**, *Fusionism & Frank Meyer* (December 8, 2006) [retrieved from National Review Online on March 29, 2014].

<sup>32</sup> J.H. **Adler**, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> J.E. **Zelizer**, *art. cit.*, p. 372.

<sup>34</sup> 2009 Hudson Conference – Paul Ryan (June 6, 2009)

This quote was part of a larger fusionist argument. Earlier in the same speech, Ryan stated that “*whenever Republicans loose an election, a factional dispute arises. About economic issues, versus moral and social issues. Traditionalists and libertarians blame each other, each claiming the Republicans would do better without the other [...] This argument has been rejoined. Why anyone would think that a minority party could grow into a majority, by splitting itself in half, is a political and mathematical mystery to me.*” In this first part, Ryan not only pleads for the acknowledgement, but even for the necessity, of fusionism.



past century, it is not surprising to find philosophers not exclusively focusing on religious conviction in any form. For the greater part of history, religion has not been associated exclusively with one major American political ideology – and neither is it true today. It is undeniable that the second half of the twentieth century has witnessed Western secularization. Consequently, those feeling reluctant to this evolution began to identify themselves with others valuing tradition and morality – incorporating the religious aspect within conservatism on the side of traditionalists.<sup>35</sup> Although this evolution developed slowly during the 1960s, it took almost everyone – especially liberals – by surprise when religious fundamentalism manifested itself as a social and political force in the 1970s. Subsequently, the religious aspect of conservatism gained prominence during the 1980s – widely seen as a conservative decade.

Notably, it is this religious aspect that has become the core of a certain branch of conservatives – the Religious Right. Although this conservative faction is in no way a representation of mainstream American conservatism, it occupies an important position in relation to this dissertation. The rise of religion as part of (traditionalist) conservatism has added an element vital to the discussion centralized in this dissertation – a commitment to traditional sexual norms.<sup>36</sup> Unlike what might be presumed, religious opposition to changing sexual norms is not solely religious. Scholars have distinguished two types of arguments as to why the Religious Right – conservative Christians – oppose this sexual evolution. One is obviously religious. The other is political. According to the latter, conservative Christians fear the stability of our polity is at stake when it comes to changing sexual norms.<sup>37</sup> Obviously, this argument does not hold true. Americans do not commit to certain traditional sexual norms because they favor raising or decreasing taxes. The sole legitimate opposition is not whether one is a liberal or a conservative; it is, in essence, a religious matter. Hence, valid opposition can be solely based on religious beliefs. Yet, defining oneself as religious in one way or another is not sufficient to be either conservative or have a problem with non-traditional sexual norms. Sociologist Sally Gallagher found the key to this dilemma was to be found in biblical inerrancy.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, dealing with different sexual norms might cause ethical dilemmas for conservative Christians. Turning to the scripture provides many of the opponents to changing morality and evolving ethical standards with counterarguments. And although ‘because the Bible tells me so’ should be respected as an argument seen from a religious point of view, it lacks the ability to reasonably defend the opposing argument. Thus, despite the similarities between libertarianism and traditionalism, religion appears to drive a wedge into the broad conservative movement.

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<sup>35</sup> D. Brinkley, *art. cit.*, p. 423.

<sup>36</sup> K. Phillips-Fein, *art. cit.*, p. 727.

<sup>37</sup> L.H. Viefhues-Bailey, *Between a man and a women? Why conservatives oppose same-sex marriage*, New York (NY), Columbia University Press, 2010, p. 8 – 9.

<sup>38</sup> L.H. Viefhues-Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Given its opposition to non-traditional sexual norms, it should be no surprise religion forms the basis of present-day conservative opposition to same-sex marriage. Indeed, historically, the appeal to biblical inerrancy has triggered fierce opposition to certain social phenomena – interracial marriage, to mention the most relevant.<sup>39</sup> In his book *Between a man and a women*, cultural philosopher Ludger Viefhues-Bailey does not explicitly mention that this adherence to the Bible provides the same opposition to same-sex marriage today; yet, it can easily be derived from his narrative. Even contemporary history underpins this argumentation. A relevant example herein is to be found in the Grand Canyon state. As recent as February 2014, conservative Arizona lawmakers pushed for Senate Bill 1062; a bill that would allow infringement on LGBT rights under the banner of religious beliefs. Although Governor Jan Brewer (R) vetoed the bill under pressure from liberals and fellow conservatives across the country, it is indicative of the many future confrontations between LGBT and religious rights. In a 2006 scholarly publication, historian Jane Dailey provides a valuable argument in this case, although she did not intend to. In fact, the subject of her publication has nothing to do with either same-sex marriage or conservatism; it has everything to do with race and religion. A valid lesson that should be learned from her study about racial segregation – including the illegality of interracial marriage – holds that the support was both fueled and channeled by the use of religion. Ministers – and politicians referring to the Bible – preaching the virtues of segregation on all fronts were everything but exceptional throughout the South.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Viefhues-Bailey refers to anthropologist Susan Harding who studies the linkage between religion and segregation as well. She provides an explanation as to why evangelicals and other conservative Christians have not lost their faith, although segregation has long been done with. Whereas a change of narrative is acceptable in most situations, evangelical dogmatism presumably prevented another interpretation of the same Bible verse. Therefore, Harding notes that “*as support for segregation gradually eroded during the late 1960s and 1970s, there was no debate about these Bible verses. They simply stopped being cited.*”<sup>41</sup> Comparing this to the current religious opposition to same-sex marriage provides LGBT rights activists with a clear answer – change the religious narrative. Even though this moment has not arrived yet, it has become hard to imagine it will never come. Picturing the fight for same-sex marriage as the civil rights struggle of the twenty first century is indeed based on the fast growing support for the cause. As Harding argues, the religious narrative in the 1960s and 1970s followed public opinion – as well as notable court cases such as *Brown v. Board of Education*. Is it hard to see the parallels between the 1960s and

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<sup>39</sup> L.H. Viefhues-Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> J. Dailey, “Sex, Segregation, and the Sacred after *Brown*” In: *The Journal of American History*, 91 (2004), 1, p. 125.

<sup>41</sup> L.H. Viefhues-Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

Harding adds: “*They, or rather their prevailing interpretation which had been considered to be the biblical inerrant truth, ceased to be part of the spoken Bible.*”

the 2010s? Is public support not quickly shifting in favor of same-sex marriage? And can *United States v. Windsor* not be a twenty first century *Brown* landmark decision?

In conclusion, it has become clear conservatism should be seen as an umbrella concept. The historical evolution, the role of religion and Frank Meyer's fusionism have made it clear conservatism includes everyone. According to Kim Phillips-Fein, the scope of conservatism stretches from "aggrieved working-class white people living in cities such as Boston to prosperous Sun Belt suburbanites."<sup>42</sup> Indeed, characteristics are multifarious; hence, conservatism as it is to be understood in this dissertation includes all these characteristics. In short, conservatism includes traditionalist and libertarian thinking, it includes religion and morality, it includes individualism and a sense of community, and it includes capitalist support and an aversion to left-leaning welfare models. Finally, conservatism sees the family as society's cornerstone, yet includes both support for and opposition to same-sex marriage.<sup>43</sup> Conservatism, as is the case with any major political worldview, lacks consistency and coherence.<sup>44</sup> Nonetheless, it is this incoherence that allows an ideology to evolve and adapt to society. A strict definition of conservatism would make the research question central in this dissertation superfluous. Indeed, defining oneself as a supporter of or an opponent to same-sex marriage is not a conservative qualification; even though some opponents understand it as such. Moreover, understanding opposition to same-sex marriage as a key qualification criterion for conservatism would exclude black conservatives. As discussed above, one of the key platforms modern conservatism grew on was fierce opposition to the civil rights act. Being a liberal act, Johnson's decision drove many blacks in the arms of the Democratic Party; mainly because the act was fiercely opposed by a conservative Republican party. Yet, should conservatives still appeal to an anti-civil rights platform, conservatism would be a white-only group. Although it is true the GOP is still predominantly white – as is the Democratic Party – it has changed its position regarding the 1964 Civil Rights Act; and so have many non-affiliated conservatives. The fact that the conservative narrative has changed once in the light of civil rights proves it can happen again. Moreover, it is happening. Change, according to Michele Baunach, can be triggered by two evolutions.<sup>45</sup> One is so-called 'cohort-succession', the other is 'intra-cohort change'. Baunach, a sociologist, came to the surprising conclusion that the latter, not the former, is responsible for most of the change.<sup>46</sup> Though, this should not be as big a surprise as it seems. Cohort-succession – the natural replacement of an older generation by a younger one – might

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<sup>42</sup> K. Phillips-Fein, *art. cit.*, p. 724.

<sup>43</sup> B.J. Christensen, "Family" In B. Frohnen, J. Beer and J.O. Nelson (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 288 – 291.

<sup>44</sup> K. Phillips-Fein, *art. cit.*, p. 727.

<sup>45</sup> D.M. Baunach, *art. cit.*, p. 350.

<sup>46</sup> D.M. Baunach, *art. cit.*, p. 356.

seem the most logical given that various polls show disproportionate support for same-sex marriage among younger people.<sup>47</sup> However, generational change is a guarantee for change to happen very slowly. Yet, recent history is proof that public opinion changes rather fast. Moreover, Paul Brewer argues the manifest changes in public opinion actually took place between 1996 and 2000; a crucial moment being the murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998.<sup>48</sup> Since Brewer's article dates from 2003 – before same-sex marriage was legal anywhere in the United States – he might want to recount that vision given the developments that took place in the last decade. Yet, his point stands and helps to explain Baunach's conclusion. Indeed, she found that intra-cohort change – change within a generation – contributed twice as much as cohort-succession to the change of public opinion – both on the liberal and the conservative side. Thus; "*attitudinal change is due more to how individuals have changed their minds about gay marriage over time, than to the 'replacement' of older and less tolerant by the younger and more tolerant.*"<sup>49</sup> Despite these changes, some of the opinions gathered under the umbrella of conservatism still mount opposition to the ongoing evolutions. Peter Sprigg, spokesperson for the conservative Family Research Council (FRC) cites three reasons as to why his organization opposes same-sex marriage. Given that the reasons are not focused to solely serve the aims of the FRC, it should be presumed these are valid arguments applicable to the broader conservative anti-same-sex marriage movement. First and foremost, Sprigg cites DOMA and the proposed FMA to define marriage as a union between one man and one woman. To preserve this definition, Sprigg adds the arguments that relationships between partners of the same sex are detrimental to our society. Although he repudiates an alternative interpretation of marriage, his argument is essentially a defense of the value of traditional marriage. Finally, Sprigg argues that marriage is not anchored in specific legal arrangements but reflects an institution grounded in human nature. Sprigg thus argues that conservative opposition against same-sex marriage is not concerned with denying equal rights.<sup>50</sup>

Taking into account these arguments, characteristics and evolutions, the philosophical definition of American conservatism as quoted above needs to be amended.<sup>51</sup> Ultimately, it was this

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<sup>47</sup> Pew Research – Religion & Public Life Project surveys shows growing support among four age groups – the Silent generation (1928 – 1945), the Baby Boomers (1946 – 1964), Generation X (1965 – 1980) and the Millennial generation (1981 - ...). In 2014, all groups peak at an all-time high. Yet, support for same-sex marriage shows large differences alongside these age groups. Pew Research found 38% of the Silent generation, 48% of the Baby Boomers, 55% of Generation X and 68% of the Millennials supporting same-sex marriage. Another Pew Research poll shows this trend holds true for Republicans as well. Approximately 61% of the 18-29 age group supports same-sex marriage.

<sup>48</sup> P.R. **Brewer**, "The Shifting Foundations of Public Opinion about Gay Rights" In: *The Journal of Politics*, 65 (2003), 4, p. 1217.

<sup>49</sup> D.M. **Baunach**, *art. cit.*, p. 356.

<sup>50</sup> L.H. **Viefhues-Bailey**, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

<sup>51</sup> B. **Frohnen**, "Conservatism" In B. **Frohnen**, J. **Beer** and J.O. **Nelson** (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 180 – 184.

"Conservatism is opposed to [the] radically individualist view of man's nature and goals [...] Conservatives defend ordered liberty established by the Constitution and the traditions and practices on which that constitution

amalgam of characteristics that led Douglas Brinkley to define conservatism as follows: “[it] encompasses a broad range of ideas, impulses, and constituencies, and many conservatives feel no obligation to choose among the conflicting, even incompatible impulses, that fuel their politics.”<sup>52</sup>

## OPINION MAKERS IN THE MEDIA

S.E. CUPP, GLENN BECK & ANN COULTER

Americans fitting the definition above are to be found in every profession and every layer of society. Yet, it is undeniable some of those people contribute more to the conservative narrative regarding same-sex marriage than others. This is not necessarily a result of them having a stronger opinion – they simply have a bigger platform. A large audience does indeed provide certain people and groups with the opportunity to shape public – or in this case conservative – opinion. Although several categories of people and organizations enjoy the support of a relatively broad platform, two categories stand out – media and politics. Despite these two categories often being intertwined, as of now, a division between the two is applied. The distinction is solely based on whether the person or organization discussed has contributed to the conservative narrative regarding same-sex marriage in the capacity of either a media pundit or a politician. Harder was the decision who was to be included in either category. Without doubt, arguments in favor of other pundits and politicians could be made with success. Nonetheless, the limited scope of this dissertation has forced me to choose between several legitimate considerations. Ultimately, a multitude of criteria has produced media figures S.E. Cupp, Glenn Beck and Ann Coulter as representative for diverse conservative views on same-sex marriage. A prime criterion for influential media pundits in the United States is undoubtedly TV appearance. Remarkably enough, only one of the three pundits selected has made her career out of television – S.E. Cupp. Sarah Elisabeth – commonly referred to as S.E. – Cupp has made her television career as a conservative pundit and host. Originally she started out as a columnist – a profession she still continues – but made her real breakthrough in visual media when she was hired as co-host for MSNBC’s *The Cycle*. In the summer of 2013, Cupp left MSNBC to become one of the two conservative pundits – alongside former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich – on CNN’s revived *Crossfire*. During that time, she has also been a panel member on TheBlaze’s *Real News*, a flagship program competing directly with established primetime news shows such as CNN’s *The Situation Room*, ABC World News and Fox News’ *Special*

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*was built [...] [Conservatives] seek to maximize the number of important relationships available to individuals as they seek to minimize the role of particular politicians and policies in dominating, destroying or displacing these associations. [...] Conservatives value each life as sacred, free and responsible, with duties, rights, and a central goal of leading a life as much in accordance with the will of God as is humanly possible.”*

<sup>52</sup> D. Brinkley, *art. cit.*, p. 414.

*Report with Bret Baier.* Furthermore, she has also been a frequent guest on other television shows as a conservative pundit – something she has in common with Ann Coulter.<sup>53</sup> The second pundit – Glenn Beck – is best known for his popular radio show. Yet, he also has a professional history in television, spanning different networks. Beck started out as host for Headline News (now HLN) in 2006, but moved his popular show on Fox News Channel in 2008. Three years later, Beck left Fox News Channel and continued to host his show on his own Dallas-based television network – TheBlaze. Coulter is the only one who has never hosted a TV-show, and presuming this gives her less airtime to talk about the issues she really wishes to talk about would be a repudiation of reality. Although Coulter has gained her conservative credentials elsewhere, her recognition as such has resulted in her being a frequent guest on morning and primetime shows across the country.<sup>54</sup> Even though this may not give Coulter the same prestige as hosting a TV-show, it should be noted that whenever she appears on air, her views and opinions steer the conversation and make her the center of the show. This is a factor that should certainly be taken into account given that several of the shows on which Coulter appears are among the most popular national broadcasts.<sup>55</sup> An additional criterion became the pundits' written platform – publications. Given the popular character of the topic discussed, publications should not be understood in terms of scholarly articles but in more approachable publications such as columns, news articles and *New York Times* best-sellers. Not only does this give Cupp, Beck and Coulter the opportunity to elaborate on the political, economic and social issues they defend on broadcast television, it also allows them to embed themselves in the broader conservative tradition; thus making them fit the definition quoted earlier. In her two books, Cupp frames herself as a conservative; a position she also defends as a columnist for the conservative *Townhall Magazine*.<sup>56</sup> As mentioned earlier, Glenn Beck is first of all a radio host. Yet, he also enlarges his platform through print media. Beck has authored several books of which two have made the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list in the non-fiction

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<sup>53</sup> TV shows on which Cupp has appeared frequently include: CNN's *Larry King Live*, MSNBC's *The Chris Matthews Show*, Fox News Channel's *Hannity* and *Red Eye with Greg Gutfeld*, ABC's *The View* and HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher* [retrieved from thesecupp.com on April 4, 2014].

<sup>54</sup> TV shows on which Ann Coulter has appeared frequently include: Fox News Channel's *Hannity*, *Fox & Friends*, *Red Eye with Greg Gutfeld*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, CNN's *Piers Morgan Live*, HBO's *Real Time with Bill Maher* and ABC's *Good Morning America*. [retrieved from anncoulter.com on April 4, 2014].

<sup>55</sup> News ratings (2014, Q1) released by mediabistro.com on April 1, 2014, show that Fox News Channel's *The O'Reilly Factor* remains the number one news show for the 49<sup>th</sup> consecutive quarter. Furthermore, the show's 11PM repeat came in tenth, confirming the large audience guests on *The O'Reilly Factor* have. Numbers two to nine are also filled with Fox News Channel shows on which Cupp and Coulter irregularly appear as guests as well.

<sup>56</sup> Cupp has co-authored "*Why you're wrong about the right. Behind the myths – the surprising truth about conservatives*" (2008) and authored "*Losing our Religion. Why the Liberal Media Want to Tell You What to Think, Where to Pray, and How to Live*" (2010). Regarding the latter, it is noteworthy that Cupp presents herself as an atheist, yet defends the religious viewpoint as part of the broader conservative narrative. Furthermore, both books were published by 'Threshold Editions', a publisher that, according to its own website, specializes in "*conservative non-fiction*."

category.<sup>57</sup> Not only the books' content place Beck on the (libertarian-) conservative side of the political spectrum. Book reviews upheld his position as well. His first #1 *New York Times* bestseller – *An Inconvenient Book* (2007) – was seen as “a good read for conservatives” by *Publishers Weekly* and as “*Serious fun for right-leaning straight shooters*” by *Barnes & Noble*. And although notable liberals did not support Beck's view, their – short-sighted – reaction gives the reader an idea as to how left-leaning popular opinion sees Beck.<sup>58</sup> In reaction to Beck's book, Jon Stewart described him as “a guy who says what people who aren't thinking, are thinking”. Robert F. Kennedy Jr. took an even less nuanced vision describing Beck as “*CNN's chief corporate-fascism advocate*.”<sup>59</sup> Despite the fascist-satirized cover, his second #1 non-fiction book – *Arguing with Idiots* (2009) – caused less consternation. Yet, his conservative stance was proven again when his book received praise from right-wing editorials and criticism from their left-wing counterparts.<sup>60</sup> Although Cupp and Beck rely on print media to influence the conservative narrative, none does it as successful as Ann Coulter. However, contrarily to Cupp and Beck, Coulter's primary occupation is writing, not television (as is the case for Cupp) nor radio (as is the case for Beck, cf. infra). Just like Beck, Coulter has published several *New York Times* bestseller non-fiction books, of which two made the top of the list – *Slander* (2002) and *Godless* (2006). Should the complete title of these books – *Slander: Liberal Lies About the American Right* and *Godless: The Church of Liberalism* – leave any doubt about whether her publications are genuine or satire, praise and recognition,<sup>61</sup> as well as quotes such as “*Liberals hate America*”, confirm her position as conservative firebrand.<sup>62</sup> Coulter further capitalizes her conservative stance as a syndicated columnist (Universal Press Syndicate), the legal correspondent for *Human Events* – the nation's first conservative weekly<sup>63</sup> – and by publishing in well-respected news outlets such as the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times* and *National Review*. A third criterion was a result of my vision of a broad conservative movement. In other words:

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<sup>57</sup> Just as Cupp's books, they are published by conservative publishing house ‘Threshold Editions’.

<sup>58</sup> Left-leaning should be understood in the American sense of the word, meaning liberal. In comparison to European politics, the American political center is to be found more to the right. This justifies defining liberal as ‘left-leaning’ whereas conservative is perceived as ‘right-leaning’.

<sup>59</sup> These and other reactions are to be found on the webpage of Simon & Schuster, Threshold Editions parent company [reactions retrieved on April 2, 2004].

<sup>60</sup> *Arguing with idiots* was praised by Frontpage Magazine, a magazine with a conservative editorial line operating under the slogan “*Inside Every Liberal Is A Totalitarian Screaming to Get Out*”. [D. **Fonsmark**, *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of Glenn Beck's Idiots* (October 12, 2009), retrieved on April 3, 2014].

Criticism was voiced by Media Matters for America, a “not-for-profit, progressive research and information center dedicated to comprehensively monitoring, analyzing, and correcting conservative misinformation in the U.S. media.” [J. **Schulman** and R. **Schweber-Koren**, *Does Glenn Beck support the slave trade or is he just an ‘idiot?’* (September 23, 2009), retrieved on April 3, 2014].

<sup>61</sup> Praising quotes on the back-cover of *Slander* include Bill Maher saying that “*The conservative movement has found its diva*” and Rush Limbaugh describing Coulter as a “*pundit extraordinaire*.”

<sup>62</sup> A. **Coulter**, *Slander: Liberal Lies About the American Right*, New York (NY), Crown Publishers, 2002, p. 5. This quote is part of a larger excerpt: “*Liberals hate America, they hate flag-wavers, they hate abortion opponents, they hate all religions except Islam, post 9/11. Even Islamic terrorists don't hate America like liberals do. They don't have the energy. If they had that much energy, they'd have indoor plumbing by now.*”

<sup>63</sup> As stated by the Human Events Group [retrieved from Human Events online on April 4, 2014].

I wanted the media pundits discussed here to be representatives of different media outlets – indeed, television influences a different public in a different way than print. Therefore, I added radio; talk radio to be more specific. Conservative pundits such as Laura Ingraham, Rush Limbaugh, Lars Larson and Glenn Beck dominate the airwaves and have an audience of over fourteen million weekly listeners in the case of Rush Limbaugh.<sup>64</sup> Of the three conservatives considered here, Ann Coulter is the only one not using talk radio to deploy her views. Undoubtedly, print and visual media serve her sufficiently to influence the conservative narrative on a broad range of issues – spreading from religion, abortion and same-sex marriage over environmentalism to taxes, military defense and big government spending. Contrarily to Coulter, Glenn Beck uses talk radio to reach a broad audience. Moreover, it is radio that has launched his career. Even though it started out as a small radio show, *The Glenn Beck* program is currently transmitted through more than four hundred radio stations, reaching millions of people across the country. Finally, Cupp seems enjoy the same platform as Coulter, yet in reverse order of importance – television prioritizes over print media. However, as recently as March 2014, Beck’s media network announced Cupp would be the host of a new radio show on TheBlaze Radio. As of March 22, 2014, Cupp co-hosts a three hour live radio show alongside Will Cain, thus spectacularly broadening the platform she can use to steer the conservative narrative.<sup>65</sup>

Considering the size of their platform was not the only reason to select Cupp, Beck and Coulter. Obviously, no selection procedure can be so rigorous that only these three candidates remain. Therefore, one also has to take account of the author’s personal understanding as to which remaining candidates might best contribute to the conservative narrative regarding same-sex marriage. However, two additional and rather obvious criteria had to be met. First of all, the pundits analyzed here have to be active participants in the same-sex marriage debate on the right. Thus, the pundits here were selected, not because they have an opinion on same-sex marriage – as do many conservatives – but because they have made their opinion on same-sex marriage part of their public trademark. This trademark will be further explored throughout the rest of this chapter in combination with the second obvious criterion; they have to be conservatives.

Undoubtedly, Cupp, Beck and Coulter are all conservatives, even if only because they define themselves as such. Furthermore, all can be quoted on various occasions supporting one or more of the conservative criteria as defined by fusionism. Instead of solely analyzing their conservative credentials, they will become clear in relation to their argumentation for or against same-sex marriage. The selection of Cupp, Beck and Coulter reveals three major conservative narratives dealing

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<sup>64</sup> Data provided by Talkers Magazine [data retrieved on April 3, 2014].

<sup>65</sup> W. Garrett, *TheBlaze Radio Network adds new shows hosted by Will Cain, S.E. Cupp, Mike Slater and more!* (March 21, 2014) [retrieved from TheBlaze on April 3, 2014].



with same-sex marriage. Cupp was selected because she makes the conservative case for same-sex marriage, even arguing that conservatism is the natural ally of LGBT rights.<sup>66</sup> A similar case was made by Ann Coulter who ended her 2011 CPAC speech with “*Gays are natural conservatives*,” even though it was part of an argument against same-sex marriage.<sup>67</sup> Beck’s position can be best described as somewhere in between Cupp and Coulter, making a ‘not against’ argument – which is not entirely the same as arguing in favor of same-sex marriage. Yet, part of the argumentation is the same. Having already acknowledged the size of Cupp’s platform, it should be noted she uses it as a Log Cabin Republican and a supporter of GOProud (cf. *infra*). Her relatively short period in the conservative spotlight has indeed been dominated by a focus on LGBT rights – alongside support for the second amendment and criticizing the Obama-administration for numerous reasons. Although these subjects are not part of the same-sex marriage debate, they confirm her conservative stance in accordance to the values of fusionist conservatism as phrased by Jonathan H. Adler (cf. *supra*).<sup>68</sup> For example, her support for second amendment rights is a confirmation of Adler’s fourth and sixth argument, and her critique on the Obama-administration in the case of for example Obamacare relies on arguments three, four, five and maybe even seven. When making the case for same-sex marriage, some of Adler’s core conservative values are to be found in the three arguments she frequently relies: the libertarian argument, the inclusion argument and the states’ rights argument. The first one is an argument she shares with Beck (cf. *infra*). At various occasions, Cupp relies on libertarian-conservative rhetoric favoring a clear limitation of government power; and especially when individual rights are concerned. She stated this vision, *inter alia*, when hosting MSNBC’s *The Cycle* in the fall of 2012. In response to her liberal co-host Krystal Ball, she said that “*conservatism and gay rights should be in many people’s mind natural allies, keeping the government out of private lives*.”<sup>69</sup> Moreover, she made a similar case one year earlier during the 2011 Log Cabin Republican Convention in Dallas as part of a larger argument. Although there she mainly relied on what I have called the inclusion argument, the libertarian ‘stay-out-of-my-pockets’ reasoning served her purpose there as well. Indeed, she is quoted to have said that

*“We all need to work to implement conservative policies, and a conservative agenda that limits the size of government, supports a strong national defense, cuts taxes and keeps the government*

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<sup>66</sup> CNN, *Crossfire* (November 19, 2013) – Cupp is quoted that “*It seems conservative, to support gay rights*”

<sup>67</sup> CPAC 2011 – Ann Coulter (February 12, 2011)

<sup>68</sup> J.H. Adler, *op. cit.*

“(1) *The existence of an objective moral order based on ontological foundations*; (2) *the primary reference for political thought and action is the individual, not the collective*; (3) *anti-utopianism*; (4) *the limitation of government power*; (5) *opposition to state control of the economy*; (6) *firm support [sic.] for the Constitution of the United States as originally conceived*; (7) *anti-communism*.”

<sup>69</sup> MSNBC, *The Cycle* (November 30, 2012)

*the hell out of our pockets, that's what matters [...] I've always thought that conservatism and gay rights are sort of natural allies. Both wanna really keep the government out of your private life.*<sup>70</sup>

Cupp thereby appeals to a broader individual rights narrative – the human rights narrative. As scholars Joseph Chamie and Barry Mirkin point out, one of the arguments in favor of same-sex marriage is often an appeal to equal rights.<sup>71</sup> Opponents of same-sex marriage will generally deny this equal rights narrative as a valid argument. For instance, Ann Coulter repudiated that argument during a debate with libertarian Fox Business host John Stossel at the International Students for Liberty Conference. When a libertarian student appealed to the individual rights/equal rights narrative and asked Coulter why homosexuals do not have the same rights as heterosexuals regarding marriage, Coulter replied with a simple “*Well, they have.*” While being booed by over a thousand libertarian students, she continued her argument by stating that homosexuals and heterosexuals alike have the right to marry someone from the opposite sex.<sup>72</sup> Scholarly research has provided counterarguments to this position that will be addressed further on. Eventually, Cupp’s libertarian argument in support of same-sex marriage is what Rory McVeigh and Maria-Elena D. Diaz see as an argument “*seeking equal access to rights and privileges that heterosexual married couples currently enjoy.*”<sup>73</sup> However, Cupp uses the libertarian argument far less than Glenn Beck (cf. infra). Instead of using it as her prime argument, Cupp generally prefers to rely on the inclusion argument. A big tent argument has been made throughout the course of history for several ideologies and political parties. In the conservative tradition, this big tent narrative is known as fusionism – an appeal to include everyone based on a shared platform, rather than adopt a small and exclusive one. During the 2011 Log Cabin Republican Convention, she pushed this narrative to the front:

*“Whatever your sexual identity or the sexual identity of others, however that fits into your conservative ideology, it’s really irrelevant. It really is, because conservatism, as you know, is good for everybody. [...] This is what makes me have the opportunities that I do, conservative policies ... They don’t have a sexual preference. They just work. They work for everybody.”*<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> 2011 Log Cabin Republican Convention – S.E. Cupp (April 30, 2011)

<sup>71</sup> J. Chamie and B. Mirkin, “Same-Sex Marriage: A New Social Phenomenon” In: *Population and Development Review*, 37 (2011), 3, p. 538.

<sup>72</sup> 2013 International Students for Liberty Conference – Ann Coulter and John Stossel (February 21, 2013)

<sup>73</sup> R. McVeigh and M-E.D. Diaz, “Voting to Ban Same-Sex Marriage: Interests, Values, and Communities” In: *American Sociological Review*, 74 (2009), 6, p. 892.

<sup>74</sup> 2011 Log Cabin Republican Convention – S.E. Cupp (April 30, 2011)

This extract is part of a larger quote: “*Many of you probably identify yourselves as conservatives, who happen to be gay, some of you identify yourselves as gay conservatives, others may be our vocal gay rights activists, or fiscal conservatives. Whatever your sexual identity or the sexual identity of others, however that fits into your conservative ideology, it’s really irrelevant. It really is, because conservatism, as you know, is good for everybody. It’s good for gays, straights, women, men, old, young, white, black, Hispanic, Christian, Muslim, atheist,*

Unlike other – mainly liberal – supporters of same-sex marriage, Cupp does not put limits on this ‘inclusiveness.’ Indeed, to be truly inclusive, an ideology has to embrace different visions and interpretations. Therefore, Cupp cannot be accused of taking a dogmatic stance in favor of same-sex marriage. Although she personally advocates for same-sex marriage, she is just as respectful to its opponents. Her vision has led her to embrace the conservative ideology to its fullest extent. In an interview she gave at Glenn Beck’s TheBlaze, she argued for both the inclusiveness of the different factions within conservatism, as well as understanding for their – equally conservative – opponents. Yet, politically, she said, “*What we can’t do, as a party, is castigate or marginalize the conservatives who support we already enjoy for their positions on gay rights.*”<sup>75</sup> Here, Cupp does not only make the issue of same-sex marriage about inclusion, she also makes it about realism and winning. Thereby, even though she may not intend it, she puts herself on the opposite side of the Ann Coulter argument. It is not that Ann Coulter does not want conservatives to win elections. She, being a “*friend of the gays,*”<sup>76</sup> genuinely believes a stance on principle and an appeal to an exclusive platform is what the majority of the American population really craves for. Chamie and Mirkin would describe Cupp’s inclusion argument as an issue of social status. As one of the arguments in favor of same-sex marriage, they have found that, especially in the United States, the struggle for same-sex marriage is not only about rights and privileges. Marriage is indeed understood by many as the cornerstone of society. Denying same-sex couples the right to marry means that same-sex couples “*cannot achieve what others consider to be the most desirable form of family life.*”<sup>77</sup> In other words, an appeal to the inclusion argument may not only enlarge chances of electoral success, it also supports Cupp’s acknowledgement that homosexuals are no second-class citizens.<sup>78</sup> Cupp’s inclusion argument became part of a bigger narrative in the beginning of 2013. Around that time, the Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) announced it would not allow Log Cabin Republicans (LCR) or GOProud to formally attend its annual conference. This was a direct result of the controversy that arose around the 2011 conference that was co-sponsored by both GOP-affiliated organizations. The formal attendance of both organizations then met with massive opposition from social conservative groups such as, amongst others, the Family Research Council and the Heritage Foundation. As a result, the organizers had chosen to ban these organizations from future attendance, thus temporarily undermining the fusionist basis of modern-day

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*New Yorker, Texan [...] This is what makes me have the opportunities that I do, conservative policies ... They don't have a sexual preference. They just work. They work for everybody.*

<sup>75</sup> B. **Hallowel**, *S.E. Cupp tells TheBlaze why she supports Gay Republican groups – and how the GOP should handle the issue* (February 28, 2013) [retrieved from TheBlaze on April 4, 2014].

<sup>76</sup> CPAC 2011 – Ann Coulter (February 12, 2011)

<sup>77</sup> J. **Chamie** and B. **Mirkin**, *art. cit.*, p. 539.

<sup>78</sup> CNN, *Crossfire* (November 19, 2013) – Cupp is quoted that “*I’m one conservative who doesn’t think same-sex couples are second class citizens.*”

conservatism.<sup>79</sup> Even though she is a supporter of same-sex marriage, Cupp decided not to boycott the 2012 conference. In fact, she used it as an opportunity to challenge conservatives to be more inclusive. Yet, this did not affect the chances of LCR and GOProud in 2013. Because these organizations were prohibited from officially co-sponsoring the event again, Cupp decided not to be part of CPAC anymore. In an interview with HuffPost Live's Abby Huntsman, Cupp steered the narrative to the inclusion – and winning – argument, an action that gained her broad support from (right-wing) LGBT activists:

*"Groups like GOProud and Log Cabin Republicans have been working doubly hard to reconcile their personal lives with their political lives. And advanced conservative causes, most of which have to do with fiscal issues. For us to sort of slap them on the face and say, you know, we no longer want your services, or are embarrassed by you, and ashamed of you and we like to put you in the back of the tent just felt really dismissive and disrespectful."*<sup>80</sup>

During the same interview, she frequently observed the dismissive and disrespectful character of CPAC's attitude towards LCR and GOProud from the pure political point of view as well. Adopting a platform that excludes the LGBT community could negatively influence conservatives' chance of electoral victory. Indeed, Cupp refers to the politically unfavorable climate for the right and remarks that *"we should be lucky that anyone is still coming to come out and cheerlead for us."*<sup>81</sup> Ultimately, Cupp occasionally appeals to a third argument, even though it seems a confirmation of her conservative credentials rather than support for same-sex marriage. Shortly after the announcement that CNN would renew *Crossfire*, the channel's Pierce Morgan introduced Cupp and her three co-hosts on his show.<sup>82</sup> In the segment, Morgan asked Cupp about her opinion on the Supreme Court's ruling in *Hollingsworth v. Perry* and *United States v. Windsor*. It is remarkable though consistent that Cupp has a different opinion on court rulings legalizing same-sex marriage in California, respectively, the United States. As a true conservative – appealing to Adler's fourth criterion – supporter of same-sex marriage, she called *Hollingsworth v. Perry* at least a *"silver lining,"* for this was an infringement on states' rights, linking her support for same-sex marriage to a states' rights narrative.<sup>83</sup>

Having analyzed Cupp's pro same-sex marriage arguments, it is remarkable to see some of them are shared with Beck's 'not against' narrative. Generally, it is fair to say that support and the

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<sup>79</sup> D. Lampo, *A Fundamental Freedom: Why Republicans, Conservatives, and Libertarians should support Gay Rights*, Lanham (MD), Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2012, p. 124, 126.

<sup>80</sup> HuffPost Live (March 4, 2013)

<sup>81</sup> HuffPost Live (March 4, 2013)

<sup>82</sup> *Crossfire* premiered on September 9, 2013 with two conservative panelists – S.E. Cupp and Newt Gingrich – alongside two liberal ones – Stephanie Cutter and Van Jones.

<sup>83</sup> CNN, *Piers Morgan Live* (June 26, 2013)

lack of opposition is not entirely the same – as is the case here. On a host of issues, Beck argues with solely libertarian arguments, yet he sees himself as a conservative. Beck publicly announced he was in limbo on the question who to vote for during the 2008 elections – defining himself as a conservative, but not a Republican. Ultimately, he presented his audience with fourteen ‘core values,’ conservative values on which he refuses to compromise. According to these, Beck meets Adler’s criteria effortlessly.<sup>84</sup> Beck, being a ‘non-opponent’ of same-sex marriage cannot be expected to make the same contributions to the conservative dialogue. Yet, given the sheer size of his audience, his opinions are widely influential. Being as libertarian as one can get within a self-acknowledged conservative framework, Beck explores the libertarian argument much further. CBS’s Katie Couric pointed out that this ironically led Beck to agree with President Obama. Even though this may not seem quite conservative, it shows a good reflection of Beck’s integrity. Unlike other conservatives, Beck does not use dogmas as ideological guidelines. On the contrary, an appeal to common sense showed him as a conservative embracing a broader opinion on marriage: “*You have the right to marry, you wanna do that, that’s fine. Why do we let the states decide, why don’t we let people make their own decisions. Who am I to say that?*”<sup>85</sup> Beck has used this argument time and again, either in a direct way or by responding with historical quotes – “*I believe that Thomas Jefferson said: ‘If it neither breaks my leg, nor picks my pocket ... What difference is it to me?’*”<sup>86</sup> Although this libertarian argument has always been his guideline, it remains dubious as to where Beck personally stands on the issue. Undoubtedly, this ‘not against’ argument is part of his broader libertarian narrative, yet, it may not be based on personal support. Although this presumption can only be based on general – and personal – impressions, some of his arguments can only be defined as ‘ultra-libertarian.’ Even to the extent that some actually see his ‘not against’ same-sex marriage argumentation as harmful for the broader LGBT rights movement. A first notorious result of his libertarian stance is what he sees as an ‘equation theory.’ Beck indeed favors to exclude the government from the institution of marriage.<sup>87</sup> However, doing so would leave the possibility to change the definition of marriage – the core of what the LGBT rights struggle is all about. Beck

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<sup>84</sup> G. Beck, *Commentary: Obama no, McCain Maybe* (June 25, 2008) [retrieved from CNN on April 5, 2014]. The first criterion is covered by “*a conservative believes that family is the cornerstone of our society,*” and “*a conservative believes that people have a right to worship the God of their understanding,*” the second criterion is met by “*a conservative believes in personal responsibility and accepts the consequences for his or her words and actions,*” the third criterion is met by “*a conservative believes that real compassion can’t be found in any government program,*” the fourth criterion is met by “*everyone, from the government on down, should live within their means and strive for financial independence,*” and “*a conservative believes in the smallest government you can get without anarchy,*” the fifth criterion is met by “*a conservative believes that those who pursue happiness and find it have a right to not be penalized for that success,*” the sixth criterion is not covered by any of these quotes but confirmed in an interview with libertarian Penn Jillette where Beck defines himself as a constitutionalist (*The Glenn Beck Show*, June 6, 2012). The seventh criterion is covered by the underlying ideals of all the above.

<sup>85</sup> CBS, *60 Minutes* (September 22, 2009)

<sup>86</sup> Fox News, *The O’Reilly Factor* (August 11, 2010)

<sup>87</sup> TheBlaze, *Glenn Beck Program* (December 6, 2012)

remarks correctly that in the traditional equation of marriage one man and one woman equals marriage. On his radio show, he makes the case to change the variables. Supporters of same-sex marriage, he argues, favor the equation as follows: one man plus one man equals marriage. However, Beck does not leave it there, but continues to change the other variables as well, thus making 'one man plus three women' equal marriage as well; hence, Beck preaches polygamy.<sup>88</sup> And although his argumentation is coherent – if you change one variable in the marriage equation, why not change the other – the result remains disturbing to the majority of contemporary American society. Statements such as this do reveal that Beck may not be a personal supporter of same-sex marriage, yet he adheres to the libertarian principle of freedom on all issues. Freedom, Beck acknowledges himself, is a concept that cannot be used for one cause only. Relying on freedom to legitimize same-sex marriage also implicitly holds recognition of other definitions of marriage. Indeed, failing to do so would give "*moral certitude*" to the one variable.<sup>89</sup> Following the Supreme Court rulings on same-sex marriage in June 2013, Beck reaffirmed this equation theory in a discussion with Senator Rand Paul (R – KY) who took the argument one step further by asking Beck on his show "*Does it have to be humans?*"<sup>90</sup> Though, a clear distinction between the two arguments should be made. Beck made clear the consequences of using libertarian argumentation in favor of same-sex marriage. Paul, preaching a generally libertarian agenda nonetheless, used the occasion to increase the number of traditionalists in his 'Stand with Rand' movement. Whereas this side of Beck's argument might sound preposterous to some, his libertarian freedom narrative even swung to the other side on at least one occasion. During the controversy around Arizona Senate Bill 1062, Beck's freedom argument was ultimately used in a way that many see as an infringement on the rights of the LGBT population.<sup>91</sup> His previous arguments – even his equation theory – were always used in a way beneficial to the cause of same-sex marriage. Yet, this seemed to have shifted in February 2014:

*"Emotionally, I'm torn on [Arizona SB 1062] because I want people to ... let's treat people right, let's just be good decent people. [...] I don't see signs in my country that say 'No Jews, No Dogs, No Gays' – whatever. And you'd have the right to have a sign if your religion taught you that. And there are religions that would say 'No Jews, No Dogs, No Gays'. So I don't like that. But I thought, you know what? We're not the same America that we were in the 1950s. We won't frequent those*

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<sup>88</sup> TheBlaze, *The Glenn Beck Program* (January 6, 2012)

<sup>89</sup> TheBlaze, *The Glenn Beck Program* (January 6, 2012)

<sup>90</sup> MSNBC, *The Rachel Madden Show* (June 26, 2013)

<sup>91</sup> Arizona SB 1062 would have allowed individuals or businesses protection on the ground of religious beliefs should they be required to do something that might be an infringement of their religious beliefs. i.e. under this law, a bakery would have had the right not to make a wedding cake for a same-sex couple, despite them willing to pay the advertised price for it. Opponents of the law feared this might lead to another segregation era with waiters refusing to serve gays in a restaurant because their religious beliefs would not allow it.

*places. And so, there's half of it. The other half is, I don't want to be forced to do something that goes against my religion. So why is this law so wrong, so hateful?"*<sup>92</sup>

Beck's narrative here is, to a certain extent, similar to Cupp's inclusion argument. Indeed, Cupp pleads for a 'big tent', including both supporters and opponents within the conservative movement. Essentially, this is also what Beck does – applying freedom to everyone, supporters and opponents alike. Yet, the main difference is that Cupp's inclusion argument is aimed at dialogue, whereas Beck's argument seems to ensure a division within society; he thus strives for a society in which people live next to each other – including exclusion as a right under the freedom banner – rather than an inclusive society with people living in dialogue. Undoubtedly, the latter form of society is the more conservative one. In essence, it can be argued that Beck's position regarding same-sex marriage is based on a thorough and consequent application of the libertarian freedom argument. Ultimately, it seems as if he gets caught up in his own narrative. Returning to Thomas Jefferson, one can indeed ask whether a violation of equal rights under the banner of freedom is any different than breaking someone's leg.<sup>93</sup>

Ultimately, one should not forget conservatism is still widely associated with opposition to same-sex marriage; and one of the many voices keeping this association alive belongs to Ann Coulter. Coulter, a self-described "*friend of the gays*" has been active much longer in the conservative same-sex marriage debate than either Cupp or Beck. Ever since the *Goodridge v. Department of Public Health* ruling by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court legalized same-sex marriage in the Bay State, Coulter has embarked on a 'pro traditional marriage' crusade, voicing her values and opinions. Even though she is one of the most vocal opponents of same-sex marriage in present-day America, it cannot be said Coulter solely runs on a negative platform. As marked, she makes the 'pro traditional marriage' argument, rather than the 'anti-same-sex marriage' one. Coulter has indeed framed it herself as being "*very pro ... marriage classic*".<sup>94</sup> Framing the argument this way does prevent Coulter from getting entangled in a downward spiral of publicity, yet it reveals the schizophrenic characteristics of her argument. Coulter generally tries to have it both ways – friend of the gays and a vocal critic of same-sex marriage. Remarkably, this combination turned out to be quite successful in 2011 when Coulter joined the GOProud advisory board, confirming the existing image GOProud is mainly a conservative organization who happens to defend gay rights on the side (cf. *infra*). Even more remarkable is that Coulter, just as Cupp, argues that

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<sup>92</sup> TheBlaze, *The Glenn Beck Show* (January 20, 2014)

<sup>93</sup> Beck himself argued on *The Glenn Beck Show* (June 6, 2012) that protesting at funerals of veterans is breaking a person's leg (Beck was debating whether the members of the Westboro Baptist Church had the right to protest these funerals. Beck's guest – libertarian Penn Jillette – said he did not mind the Westboro Baptist Church protesting at funerals of veterans because that is also what freedom is about. Beck intervened and pointed out that, in his view, this actually broke his leg).

<sup>94</sup> C-SPAN 2, *In Depth with Ann Coulter* (August 7, 2011)

homosexuals are natural conservatives – interpreting Coulter’s conservatism as the only true conservative creed. Statements about the natural alliance between homosexuals and conservatives have been made frequently by Coulter. In a Q&A session at CPAC’s 2007 conference, Coulter is quoted to have said: *“I don’t know why all gays aren’t Republican. I think we have the pro-gay positions, which is anti-crime and for tax cuts. Gays make a lot of money and they’re victims of crime. No, they are! They should be with us!”*<sup>95</sup> Four years later, she took the ‘gays are natural conservative’ argument even further. In an interview with C-SPAN’s Peter Slan, Coulter made the case that basically the whole Republican platform was fighting the same fight homosexuals were fighting. On top of the arguments quoted above, she added that homosexuals could not be liberals in any natural way. Indeed, liberals support abortion which may not be a priority for homosexuals, but *“as soon as liberals find a gay gene, guess who’s gonna get aborted.”*<sup>96</sup> So far, Coulter’s narrative seems rather comparable to S.E. Cupp’s – gays are, after all, natural conservatives. Furthermore, Coulter’s pro traditional marriage narrative relies on several of Adler’s conservative characteristics, mainly the first and the second. However, even though Coulter describes herself *“as born again evangelical Christian as they come,”* it is noteworthy she almost never appeals to a religious – popularly known as ‘Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve’ – argument.<sup>97</sup> Marriage, according to Coulter, is a long lasting union between one man and one women; it forms the basis of a family which is, in turn, the cornerstone of American society. In an attempt to capture the whole conservative narrative, she tried to portray the whole Republican Party as opponents of same-sex marriage. *“The purpose of marriage,”* Coulter argues, *“is not to sanctify the intense feelings people have for each other. The purpose is to harness men’s predatory biological impulses into a paired heterosexual relationship directed toward raising children.”*<sup>98</sup> Thus, marriage clearly is not about love, a position consistent with her fierce opposition to divorce as well. For Coulter, it is all about the stability a traditional family provides. Thereby, Coulter appeals to what Chamie and Mirkin distilled as two of the most frequently used arguments against same-sex marriage.<sup>99</sup> The first argument Coulter makes is based on the role of marriage throughout human history. For the greatest part of civilized history, the fundamental purpose of marriage has been to promote procreation. Put otherwise, Coulter believes altering the definition of marriage is a violation of our history. Furthermore, she even blames liberals for bringing up an issue no one has cared about for *“over a thousand years.”*<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> CPAC 2007 – Ann Coulter (March 2, 2007)

The selected quote was preceded by a more colorful part: *“Well, you know, screw you! I’m not anti-gay! We’re against gay marriage. I don’t want gays to be discriminated against.”*

<sup>96</sup> C-SPAN 2, *In Depth with Ann Coulter* (August 7, 2011)

<sup>97</sup> CPAC 2011 – Ann Coulter (February 12, 2011)

<sup>98</sup> A. Coulter, *If Democrats had any brains, they’d be Republicans*, New York (NY), Crown Publishers, 2007, p. 113.

<sup>99</sup> J. Chamie and B. Mirkin, *art. cit.*, p. 540.

<sup>100</sup> CPAC 2011 – Ann Coulter (February 12, 2011)



Moreover, contemporary fears about population growth undermine this archaic procreation argument to a certain extent. The second argument Coulter appeals to is seeing traditional marriage as the bedrock of society. Changing the definition of marriage would undermine its value in society, and may even run contrary to the intentions of God. Therefore, unlike conservatives such as President George W. Bush, Coulter also opposes civil unions that provide same-sex couples with equal rights. Coulter's opposition is twofold. First of all, "*protecting gay rights is done by contracts*,"<sup>101</sup> and second of all, civil unions and marriage are not about rights. At GOProud's 2010 Homocon, Coulter was quoted to have said that "*Marriage is not a civil right – you're not black!*"<sup>102</sup> Clearly, for Coulter, marriage is not about rights. Moreover, should it be about rights, nobody is denied any (cf. supra) – both homosexuals and heterosexuals have the right to marry someone of the opposite sex. Yet, scholar Reginald Williams makes the argument that such a narrative is, in fact, a violation of equal rights. His argument is built on the presumption that marriage is a collective right, rather than an individual one. Framing marriage as an individual right, he argues, does not have any value. It would be more or less the same as applying the right to assemble to a single individual. Williams points out that in both cases, the 'right' at stake has value only when applied to a social unit that is larger than a single individual; and indeed, allowing a single person to marry does not give him a right for he or she cannot exercise it. Marriage, Williams argues, is not an individual right, it is a couple's right.<sup>103</sup> Therefore, same-sex marriage is an equal rights issue; and based on this frame of equal rights, undoubtedly, Coulter's pro traditional marriage narrative holds a violation of these rights. However, Coulter's defense of traditional marriage is based on the perception that marriage is an individual right. Should marriage be an individual right, it is possible that Coulter doesn't infringe on anyone's rights. One could still argue that in Coulter's vision on marriage, homosexuals are still denied the right to marry their loved ones, as opposed to straight people. Yet, as mentioned above, marriage is not based on love; according to Coulter, it should be a cornerstone of society focused on raising children in a stable environment (cf. supra). Essentially, Coulter's argument here is coherent and consistent, yet based on the wrong definition of marriage. Coulter's denial that marriage is a collective right prevents her from acknowledging that her pro traditional marriage discourse holds, in fact, a violation of equal rights. Altogether, Coulter's pro traditional marriage narrative does the following. Firstly, it sees traditional marriage – one man, one woman – as the cornerstone of society. Therefore, she denies homosexuals the possibility to marry one another. Secondly, Coulter does not see love as the crucial factor in marriage. Hence, denying homosexuals the right to marry is no violation of equal rights – presuming that marriage is an individual right. Thirdly, she acknowledges LGBT rights, yet does not believe

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<sup>101</sup> 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Founders Night Independence Institute – Ann Coulter (February 16, 2012)

<sup>102</sup> 2010 GOProud Homocon – Ann Coulter (September 25, 2010)

<sup>103</sup> R. Williams, "Same-Sex Marriage and Equality" In: *Ethical Theory & Moral Practice*, 14 (2011), 5, p. 593.

conservatives violate them. However, according to Coulter, liberals do. Essentially, her pro traditional marriage discourse is a mere adaptation of her anti-liberal – or pro conservative – narrative. Everything she believes is wrong in American society – and that includes the current debate over same-sex marriage – is to be blamed on liberals. Therefore, she makes the case that “*all gays who are born gay are overwhelmingly conservative – maybe apolitical – and all those angry gays, causing trouble for everybody [Coulter refers to LGBT rights activists], I don’t even think they were born gay, I think they are just angry at their fathers.*”<sup>104</sup> Fourthly, her pro traditional marriage narrative obviously clashes with pro same-sex marriage discourses. A part of S.E. Cupp’s inclusion argument aimed indeed at the possibility of elevating same-sex couples to the same social status heterosexual couples already enjoy. Although Coulter often argues in a straight line, it is undeniable her pro traditional marriage narrative prevents this elevation, and thus essentially denies homosexual couples the possibility to enjoy the same social status; thus making these couples second-class.

Together, Cupp, Beck and Coulter represent more than just three narratives in the same-sex marriage debate. All three rely on several arguments and appeal to more or less the same conservative basis. Cupp, Beck and Coulter embed their narrative in a broader conservative tradition, reflecting their individual vision on both society and conservatism. As ascertained above, S.E. Cupp relies on three arguments. One of them – the libertarian argument – is shared with Glenn Beck, although it turned out to be undeniable that Beck takes the argument much further. Another one – the inclusion argument – is remarkably enough shared with same-sex marriage opponent Ann Coulter. Both indeed adopt the position that homosexuals are natural conservatives, yet defend completely opposite sides in the same-sex marriage debate; thus making it harder to univocally answer the principal research question.

## THE GRAND OLD PARTY

FROM MICHELE BACHMANN OVER DICK CHENEY TO GOPROUD & LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS

S.E. Cupp, Glenn Beck, and Ann Coulter have a combined audience of millions of Americans – millions of conservative Americans, to be more precise. Yet, even though they might heavily influence a conservative audience, one should also take account of the political theatre. The conservative same-sex marriage debate is indeed a two-tier discussion. Furthermore, one tier – media – has proven to consist of three different narratives represented by the pundits discussed above. However, there can be no guarantee that similar arguments will be found when analyzing the sec-

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<sup>104</sup> C-SPAN 2, *In Depth with Ann Coulter* (August 7, 2011)

ond tier – politics. Moreover, it would be at least surprising to find that politicians and media pundits alike rely on the exact same arguments, although it would be equally surprising to find that they do not have anything in common. Thus, it is important to take account of the differences between the theatres of media and politics, for actors in the former theatre only have the ability to analyze and comment on the actions of their counterparts in the latter. Politicians, unlike media pundits, have the ability to either legalize or outlaw same-sex marriage. And with the exception of the courts, they are the only ones able to do so. Consequently, their opinions on an issue such as same-sex marriage can have much more impact than any opinion voiced by Cupp, Beck or Coulter. Accordingly, the stakes are much higher as well, because unlike pundits, politicians owe their job to their constituents, and more importantly, campaign funders. As a result, they could easily lose their job when advocating something either of these groups does not wish to hear. Given that a large part of the contemporary Republican voters' base is deeply religious and/or ethical conservative, it should be no surprise that prominent conservatives supporting same-sex marriage are rare in politics, especially compared to their presence in the media theatre.<sup>105</sup> Moreover, with the state bans on same-sex marriage being challenged in all but four states that still outlaw same-sex marriage today, it is highly likely that politicians tend to stand by and watch what happens before taking a clear stance on the issue when running for reelection.<sup>106</sup> Yet, some have dared to take a stance in favor of same-sex marriage, even though they form a clear minority. To determine which politicians best represent the opposing narratives in the political theatre, I have applied criteria similar to those used when selecting Cupp, Beck, and Coulter as media pundits. Once again, these criteria have provided more possibilities than the politicians discussed and analyzed in this dissertation. Therefore, the reader also has to take account of the author's personal understanding as to which politicians most actively contribute to the broader same-sex marriage debate.

The first, although obvious, criterion holds that the selected politicians have to be both conservative and Republican. Luckily, these terms generally overlap, even though Tea Partiers tend to call approximately half of their colleagues RINO's – Republican in Name Only. And it is undeniable that different interpretations of 'conservatism' exist within the GOP. Therefore, I will rely once again on Jonathan Adler's criteria to establish the selected politicians' conservative credentials. Secondly, it was required for the politicians selected to have a clear stance on the issue of same-sex marriage. Many Republicans do indeed take a position on – against – same-sex marriage

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<sup>105</sup> B. Frohnen, "Conservatism" and S. Zentner, "Republican Party" In B. Frohnen, J. Beer and J.O. Nelson (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 180 – 184,; 731 – 734.  
K. Phillips-Fein, *art. cit.*, p. 727.

<sup>106</sup> As of May 2014, thirty three states have banned same-sex marriage. State bans against the practice are challenged in all of them, with the exception of Alaska, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota ["Pending Marriage Equality Cases" retrieved from Lambda Legal on May 2, 1014].

simply because it has become part of being a Republican, rather than being part of their core understanding of society. Essentially, the politicians' support for or opposition to same-sex marriage has to be part of his or her 'political brand'. A third criterion concerns the width of their platform. As was the case for the media pundits, the size of the audience was crucial to determine as to whether a politician has the possibility to contribute sufficiently to the same-sex marriage debate. Given the national scope of this debate, politicians have to appeal to an audience wider than their constituency. Ultimately, this has allowed for the selection of Congresswomen Michele Bachmann (R – MN6) and former Vice President Dick – Richard Bruce – Cheney. Bachmann, being the uncrowned *Queen of the Tea Party*, easily fits Adler's criteria. In a statement made after founding the House Tea Party Caucus, she expressed her opinion that Americans "*have had enough of the spending, bureaucracy and the government-knows-best mentality running rampant today throughout the halls of Congress*" and thus heavily relied on Adler's second, third, fourth, and fifth argument.<sup>107</sup> Her self-acknowledgement as a "Constitutional Conservative" ties in with Adler's sixth argument;<sup>108</sup> and she clearly bases her opposition against Obamacare on Adler's seventh argument – anti-communism. Furthermore, she fiercely opposes the legalization of same-sex marriage. Even though this stance is in accordance with Adler's first argument, her support for enhanced regulation affecting one of the most intimate aspects of life – marriage – seems to contradict the conservative creed of small government. Already in the late 1990s, Bachmann was able to attract a great deal of support with these stances and launched a successful campaign for the Minnesota State Senate. Quite soon, she devoted her time as a state Senator to the moral aspects of life and gained prominence when she introduced SF2715.<sup>109</sup> Thereby, Bachmann made her first attempt to constitutionally outlaw same-sex marriage. Even though the bill ultimately stalled and subsequent attempts (SF1691, SF022) shared the same fate, her opposition to same-sex marriage gradually became one of her strongest political positions. When she traded her seat in the state Senate for a Congressional seat representing Minnesota's sixth Congressional district, she did not soften her stance. Quite the opposite. Even though she never proposed a constitutional amendment on the federal level, she soon joined a group of conservative lawmakers supporting President George W. Bush's 2004 plea for a FMA. In Congress, her anti-same-sex marriage narrative enjoys the support of many prominent Republicans – these include, amongst others, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R – KY), Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R – NH), Sen. Ted Cruz (R – TX), and House Speaker John Boehner (R – OH8) – even though many personify another brand of conservatism. Nonetheless, it is my belief that Michele Bachmann best fits the foregoing criteria. Accordingly, she appears

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<sup>107</sup> J. Sherman, *Bachmann forms Tea Party Caucus* (July 16, 2010) [retrieved from Politico on May 2, 2014].

<sup>108</sup> 'About Michele' [retrieved from official House website Michele Bachmann on May 2, 2014].

<sup>109</sup> SF2715: "*A bill for an act proposing an amendment to the Minnesota Constitution by adding a section to article XIII; recognizing as marriage only a union between one man and one women*" (Introduced on March 11, 2004).

to be the most suitable Republican to represent the opposing narrative in the same-sex marriage debate. Another Republican narrative exists as well, though its supporters are few. Indeed, most Republicans on the federal level still oppose same-sex marriage, if only because it was confirmed as the official platform as recent as 2012.<sup>110</sup> Hence, the political debate mostly takes place alongside partisan lines, with as few as five Republican lawmakers publicly supporting same-sex marriage.<sup>111</sup> Yet, none of them has actively taken part in the debate about same-sex marriage, which has caused me to look beyond the Congressional hemisphere. Taking into account the importance of active participation in national politics has led me to select former Vice President Dick Cheney. It is my understanding that, out of the limited possibilities, the former Vice President is best placed to represent a narrative opposed to Congresswoman Bachmann's. Reasons for doing so were numerous. First of all, Cheney is conservative; and to be more specific, he is often associated with so-called neo-conservatism. This branch of conservatism peaked during the Bush (43) administration and is often seen as a right-wing reaction against liberal utopianism, thereby fulfilling Adler's third criterion.<sup>112</sup> Other criteria are easily fulfilled when scrutinizing his political track record; first as US Representative from Wyoming's at-large district, later as Secretary of Defense in the Bush (41) Administration, and ultimately as Vice President in the Bush (43) Administration. Yet, especially when it comes to his time as a lawmaker, Cheney is not always remembered as deeply conservative. According to fellow lawmaker Barney Frank (D – MA4), this was a result of the fact that he, "*unlike Newt Gingrich, did not yell at anybody.*"<sup>113</sup> Nonetheless, his voting record tells otherwise. Given the scope of this dissertation, I do not feel it is required to elaborate on his entire legislative and executive history – even though his stance on second amendment rights is quite

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<sup>110</sup> 2012 Republican Platform – "We believe in America," p. 10, 31.

<sup>111</sup> In the 113<sup>th</sup> US Congress, following Republican lawmakers publicly support same-sex marriage: Sen. Mark Kirk (R – IL), Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R – AK), Sen. Rob Portman (R – OH), Rep. Richard Hanna (R – NY22), and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R – FL27). This number can increase slightly after the 2014 midterms as neither of the Senators face reelection, while polls show Congressman Hanna in a comfortable lead over Republican challengers (no Democrat has filed for his seat). Rep. Ros-Lehtinen's seat is also up for reelection, yet no other candidate has filed to run in the 27<sup>th</sup> Congressional district before the deadline of Noon, May 2, 2014. Furthermore, at least three additional republican candidates supporting same-sex marriage are running in November 2014. Two of them – Carl DeMaio (R – CA52) and Richard Tisei (R – MA6) – have a decent chance of getting elected for the 114<sup>th</sup> US Congress. The third candidate – Dan Innis (R – NH1) – trails his opponents, both Democratic and Republican, badly.

M. **Weiner**, "*Assemblywoman Claudia Tenney will make GOP primary bid against Rep. Richard Hanna*" (March 26, 2014) [retrieved from Syracuse.com on May 3, 2014].

Candidate Listing for 2014 General Election [retrieved from Florida Division of Elections on May 3, 2014]. Survey USA Election Poll #20576 shows DeMaio leading the Democratic incumbent 48% – 39%; Emerson College polling shows Tisei and the Democratic incumbent both at 44%; University of New Hampshire Survey Center polling shows Innis trailing the Democratic incumbent 29% – 45%.

<sup>112</sup> J. **Ehrman**, "Neoconservatism" In B. **Frohnen**, J. **Beer** and J.O. **Nelson** (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 610 – 614.

<sup>113</sup> M. **Kranish**, *Conservative tilt in Congress with a moderate's style* (July 26, 2000) [retrieved from Boston Globe Archive on May 3, 2014].

illustrative.<sup>114</sup> However, more significant is his take on social issues. Certainly, his original position on several social programs and practices have gained him his conservative credentials. Fierce opposition to abortion under any circumstances perfectly ties in with Adler's first criterion, whereas his opposition to Head Start – Federal funded preschool for poor children – easily fits the second, fourth, and fifth criterion.<sup>115</sup> Most important is however the conservative case he makes in favor of same-sex marriage. Unsurprisingly, he therefore relies on Adler's second and fourth criterion – or what I have previously dubbed the 'libertarian argument'. He strengthens his position by also adopting a states' rights narrative, which connects his argumentation to the pro marriage equality stance defended by S.E. Cupp (cf. supra). Furthermore, the final two criteria – taking a stance on same-sex marriage, and enjoying a wide platform – are fulfilled as well. Earlier than most other contemporary participants in the same-sex marriage debate, Cheney already came out in favor of marriage equality during the 2000 vice-presidential debate against Joe Lieberman (cf. infra); and while the administration which he served as Vice President came out in support of a FMA, Cheney always held on to his beliefs, even though he kept silent for most of his time in the Bush (43) Administration.<sup>116</sup> Yet, given his pioneering position and the scarcity of conservative politicians favoring same-sex marriage, it was my decision to include him nonetheless. Ultimately, the question of his platform remains. Obviously, Cheney does not have to rely on a *Tea Party Express* or anything alike to get his message across. As former Defense Secretary and Vice President, he is welcome guest in TV studios and as a public speaker. However, health problems have forced him to limit his public appearances, meaning that, of all pundits and politicians analyzed here, Cheney is the least visible. Yet, given his prominent status, almost unique views – for a high ranking Republican politician – and, once again, his pioneering role, it seems legitimate to analyze his rhetoric as a representation of the conservative political narrative supporting same-sex marriage. Further evidence of both Bachmann's and Cheney's conservative credentials will be provided throughout the rest of this chapter, whenever the circumstances require so. An analysis of solely Bachmann's and Cheney's position would be informative, yet incomplete. Individual politicians have to share the political theatre with organizations which are, in this case, affiliated with the Republican Party. Both Log Cabin Republicans (LCR) and GOProud are conservative groups that

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<sup>114</sup> Amongst several possible examples, it is his position on gun rights that makes him fit Adler's third, fourth, and fifth criterion. In 1985, Cheney was one of twenty one lawmakers voting against HR3132 which regulates the manufacture, importation, and sale of armor-piercing ammunition. Three years later, he confirmed his stance against government involvement and gun control by voting together with only three other lawmakers against HR4445, a bill banning plastic guns that could get past airport security.

<sup>115</sup> Cheney later made an exception for the cases of rape and incest, as well as when the pregnancy posed a threat to the mother's life. Later, he also acknowledged that his decision regarding Head Start was a result of financial austerity, rather than opposition against the program itself. Opposition to federal funding for schooling further shrank when he came out in favor of George W. Bush's "*No child left behind*" policy.

<sup>116</sup> C.A. **Rimmerman**, "The Presidency, Congress, and same-sex marriage" In: C.A. **Rimmerman** and C. **Wilcox** (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 286.

have adopted – and defend – the entire Republican platform, save the ‘traditional marriage’ clauses. Given that these organizations have adopted a platform that essentially represents political conservatism in contemporary America, the fulfillment of Adler’s criteria is inherently presumed. Therefore, these organizations’ conservative credentials will not be addressed any further. The inclusion of these two organizations may trigger two ostensibly relevant questions. On the one hand, one can ask as to why two organizations, rather than one, are included; especially given that they fight the same fight. Whereas this is true, the inclusion of only one would bypass the nuanced differences between these two organizations, differences that arose when two LCR directors decided to break away from the organization and create GOProud. Co-founder Christopher Barron phrased their motivation as follows:

*“Essentially, there’s no voice for gay Republicans or gay conservatives in particular in D.C. right now. Log Cabin has been completely and totally absent here in D.C. for months and months. [...] It has simply moved way too far to the left and is basically indistinguishable from any other gay left organization.”<sup>117</sup>*

On the other hand, the question may arise why only GOP-affiliated organizations supporting same-sex marriage are included, whereas the political and media personalities in this paper have been carefully balanced out to represent both sides of the debate. Yet, presuming that the inclusion of LCR and GOProud is a partisan decision of the author to tilt this paper’s balance in favor of same-sex marriage is nothing but a fallacy. Rather than representing a one-sided argument, both organizations embody the ongoing struggle LGBT conservatives face in twenty first century America. Hence, the choice for both organizations is in itself an inclusion of both a supportive and an opposing narrative – represented by the official Republican platform – and thus offers yet another prism through which this debate can be considered.

However, the most dominant prism amongst Republican politicians is represented by Congresswomen Michele Bachmann. Even though, in this chapter, she is the only Republican opposing same-sex marriage, it should not be forgotten that her visions are shared by a majority of Republican lawmakers, both on federal and state level. Given that Bachmann might be considered the political counterpart of pundit Ann Coulter, it is no surprise to find they have a shared platform. Yet, they both rely as well on argumentation that is exclusively part of their respective narratives. Just like Coulter’s crusade against same-sex marriage was a result of her being “*friend of the gays*” (cf. supra), so is Bachmann’s opposition not based on hating homosexuals. She even loves them.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, just like Coulter, she appeals to the religious conservative narrative which considers

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<sup>117</sup> B. Smith, *Gay Republicans Split* (April 10, 2009) [retrieved from Politico on May 3, 2014].

<sup>118</sup> KKMS 980-AM, *Prophetic Views Behind the News w. Jan Markell* (March 20, 2004)

marriage to be the bedrock of society.<sup>119</sup> This was already her key motivation as a state Senator when she made the case for a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in the North Star State. She later defended her actions in the Minnesota Senate as a Godly incentive triggered by the court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in Massachusetts. On the 2012 Iowa caucus campaign trail, she recounted that she had heard the news on her local radio station after which she went to prayer to ask the Lord what to do. Thereafter, she told reporters that “*just through prayer, I knew that I was to introduce the marriage amendment.*”<sup>120</sup> The religious aspect of her opposition to same-sex marriage is more prominent than Coulter’s and ties in perfectly with opponents’ interpretation of ‘biblical morality.’ Scholars Kenneth D. Wald and Graham B. Glover do indeed argue that for many “*the scripture is clear about the morality of homosexuality, so the only way someone can find arguments to support gay marriage is by dispensing altogether with religion.*”<sup>121</sup> As several religious denominations show, dispensing with religion is no requirement to accept same-sex marriage. Nonetheless, it remains true that many, including Michele Bachmann, rely on religion to oppose non-traditional marriages. Bachmann, who is an evangelical, clearly follows the teachings of her denomination on this issue.<sup>122</sup> Even though religion thus seems to be the foundation of her opposition to same-sex marriage, it certainly is not the only narrative which Bachmann appeals to. Already in 2004, she plead for an exclusive understanding of marriage whilst defending her position in favor of a constitutional amendment on local talk radio. She phrased her argument as follows: “*It isn’t that some gays will get some rights, it’s that everyone else in our state will lose rights.*”<sup>123</sup> Rory McVeigh and Maria-Elena D. Diaz found this to be one of the breaking points separating opponents and supporters of same-sex marriage. As an opponent, Bachmann makes the case for an exclusive understanding of marriage and argues that “*same-sex marriage is not only wrong on moral grounds, but also harm[s] society.*”<sup>124</sup> Essentially, her plea is one in favor of traditional marriage, which then happens to violate rights of a certain demographic group as a byproduct. Unlike Coulter, who really makes an effort to prove that LGBT couples have the same rights as their heterosexual counterparts, Bachmann seems to accept the inequality, even though she might have changed her position during the 2012 Iowa caucus campaign (cf. *infra*). However, the sincerity of this remains doubtful for Bachmann’s vision on same-sex marriage is clearly based on an aversion to gay sexuality. When speaking as a state Senator at the EdWatch National Education Conference in 2004, she was quoted to have said that “*if you are involved in the gay and lesbian*

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<sup>119</sup> J. Chamie and B. Mirkin, *art. cit.*, p. 540.

<sup>120</sup> D. St. George, *Michele Bachmann’s certainty is her greatest strength, biggest weakness* (December 13, 2011) [retrieved from the *Washington Post* on May 4, 2014].

<sup>121</sup> K.D. Wald and G.B. Glover, “Theological perspectives on gay unions. The uneasy marriage of religion and politics” In: C.A. Rimmerman and C. Wilcox (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 105.

<sup>122</sup> L.H. Viefhues-Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

<sup>123</sup> KKMS 980-AM, *Prophetic Views Behind the News w. Jan Markell* (March 20, 2004)

<sup>124</sup> R. McVeigh and M-E.D. Diaz, *art. cit.*, p. 893.



*lifestyle, it's bondage, personal bondage, personal despair and personal enslavement.*"<sup>125</sup> Even though, originally, not much attention was paid to this quote, it came under close scrutiny during her 2012 campaign. However, when running for the nation's highest office, she never responded to any allegations or insinuations based on this quote. A canned response – "*I'm not running to be anyone's judge*" – was given whenever confronted with this statement.<sup>126</sup> Despite this evasive approach, her short-lived presidential campaign has caused her to polish at least part of her vision. Indeed, she previously did not made a secret of her disdain of homosexuals and accordingly did not made any attempt to promote her position as a defense of equal rights. Yet, running as a Tea Partier against more moderate and better funded Republicans in the 2012 primaries, she could not afford to lose any votes. A – political – change of heart was the result. At a rally during the Iowa Caucus campaign, she relied on an argument long defended by Coulter:

*"They [LGBT people] can get married, but they abide by the same law as everyone else. They can marry a man if they're a woman. Or they can marry a woman if they are a man. [...] They have the same opportunity under the law. There is no right to same-sex marriage [...]"*<sup>127</sup>

Many may perceive this as the exact same argument Coulter frequently makes; yet, by doing so, one ignores the subtle, though crucial, differences between both narratives. Indeed, according to Coulter, marriage is not about rights (cf. supra) which makes her argument rather sound and not susceptible to academic pro same-sex marriage equal rights supporters. However, Bachmann later added that "*there are no special rights for people based upon [...] sex practices.*"<sup>128</sup> Even though she might have ostensibly strengthened her position, Bachmann also turned her argument into a real issue of equal rights. Moreover, she ignored the fact that opposition against same-sex marriage automatically grants preferential treatment to opposite-sex couples; hence, she clearly grants special rights to heterosexuals. Consequently, by making marriage an issue about rights whilst simultaneously denying those rights to people with a sexual preference other than heterosexuality, Bachmann's narrative is, more than Coulter's, unable to counter Williams' argument that marriage is a collective, rather than an individual, right (cf. supra).<sup>129</sup> Given that Bachmann has never repeated the argument in public debates or interviews, she has denied herself the opportunity to amplify her equal rights narrative. Rather than an inclusive rights argument, Bachmann thus appeals to exclusive rights to support her narrative. According to both Chamie and Mirkin,<sup>130</sup> and McVeigh and Diaz,<sup>131</sup> such argumentation is rather common among opponents to

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<sup>125</sup> NBC, *Meet the Candidate – Michele Bachmann* (August 8, 2011)

<sup>126</sup> NBC, *Meet the Candidate – Michele Bachmann* (August 8, 2011)

<sup>127</sup> Transcript provided by 2012 Iowa Caucuses (November 30, 2011) [retrieved on May 4, 2014].

<sup>128</sup> Transcript provided by 2012 Iowa Caucuses (November 30, 2011) [retrieved on May 4, 2014].

<sup>129</sup> R. Williams, *art. cit.*, p. 593.

<sup>130</sup> J. Chamie and B. Mirkin, *art. cit.*, p. 540.

<sup>131</sup> R. McVeigh and M-E.D. Diaz, *art. cit.*, p. 893.

same-sex marriage. Yet, it is undeniable that Bachmann implemented this argument in a rather unfortunate way. The lawmaker even further exposed her narrative to critical attacks by essentially making it about privileges and limited rights. Indeed, during the 2012 election campaign, Bachmann signed “The marriage vow – a declaration of *dependence* upon marriage and family’ together with fellow contender Rick Santorum (R). Amongst other statements, they both acknowledged marriage to be a fundamental unit of society and have plead “*vigorous opposition to any redefinition of the Institution of Marriage.*” This includes “*faithful monogamy between one man and one women – through,*” and this is certainly remarkable for an anti-government conservative “*statutory-, bureaucratic-, or court-imposed recognition of intimate unions which are bigamous, polygamous, polyandrous, same-sex, etc.*”<sup>132</sup> In fact, when defending both intertwined narratives – exclusivity and equal rights – Bachmann’s argumentation appears to be schizophrenic, if not purely hypocritical. She frequently fulminates against government involvement, aiming at both the executive, the legislature, and the judiciary. Yet, when it comes to the sanctity of marriage, Bachmann’s worst enemy suddenly becomes her closest ally when fighting against moral decay – a reality illustrated by her own legislative efforts to ban same-sex marriage in Minnesota. Proof of this argument – as well as of her disdain of homosexuals – can be found in the recent debate about Arizona Senate Bill 1062 (cf. supra). In a radio interview with conservative host Lars Larson, Bachmann repudiated fellow Republican and Arizona Governor Jan Brewer’s decision to veto a bill that would allow discrimination against LGBT-people under the banner of religious freedom. Even though Arizona Senator Steve Yarbrough has publicly stated that his effort was a clear reaction against a New Mexico lawsuit involving the wedding of a same-sex couple, Bachmann refused to believe that the bill in any way harmed the LGBT-community. Consequently, she failed to understand why Brewer vetoed it and argued as follows:

*“There’s nothing about gays in there, but the gay community decided to make this their measure and the thing that I think is getting a little tiresome is the gay community have so bullied the American people [...]”*<sup>133</sup>

Even though this perfectly ties in with a statement she made earlier arguing that those who oppose same-sex marriage actually have a harder time defending their message than supporters of same-sex marriage, it also reveals the inconsistency of her general narrative.<sup>134</sup> First of all, Bachmann endorsed a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in the whole of the

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<sup>132</sup> The Family Leader, *The Marriage Vow, A Declaration of Dependence upon Marriage and Family*.

<sup>133</sup> KXL, *The Lars Larson Show* (March 10, 2014)

This quote was part of a larger argument which continues as follows: “[...] and they’ve so intimidated politicians that politicians fear them, and so they think that they get to dictate the agenda everywhere. Well, not with the Constitution, you don’t.”

<sup>134</sup> CNN, *Piers Morgan Tonight* (March 5, 2012)

United States. Two explanations seem possible. Either Bachmann does not think that the Framers were complete when they drafted the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, or she does believe that the government – the federal government – has a role to play in people’s personal life. Both seem hardly conservative. Second of all, Bachmann not only supports a FMA, she generally supports all legislation discriminating against same-sex couples, as proven by her support for Arizona Senate Bill 1062. It is obviously a fair argument to support legislation passed by a majority in any House of Representatives, as was the case in Arizona. Yet, such reasoning does not tie in with her reaction to the legalization of same-sex marriage in her home state of Minnesota, also passed by a majority in both houses of the state legislature. A disappointed reaction followed arguing that this “*denies religious liberty to people who believe in traditional marriage and who do not want to be forced to violate their conscience and sincerely held religious beliefs,*”<sup>135</sup> even though this bill does not force people into same-sex marriages. Moreover, opponents of same-sex marriage are still allowed their own (religious) thoughts as well as the right to disapprove of marriages they deem less worthy than their own. Yet, the argument against the legalization of same-sex marriage in Minnesota makes Bachmann – a freedom loving conservative – seem as if she wants to force a certain way of thinking upon a people, regardless what their democratically elected representatives have decided. Obviously, this cannot be true for she voiced support for the exact opposite when the Arizona bill was at stake. Third of all, Bachmann expectedly blasted the Supreme Court’s ruling in *United States v. Windsor* and *Hollingsworth v. Perry* by saying that “[*The Supreme Court*] *undercut the people’s representatives when they voted on the Defense of Marriage Act in the first place.*”<sup>136</sup> Clearly, this is the same line of argumentation as the one she used when discussing the Arizona Senate Bill. This rare coherent moment is only ostensible due to the fact that she has called upon the Supreme Court several times to undertake similar action regarding another piece of legislation passed by a majority in both Houses of Congress – Obamacare.<sup>137</sup>

Even though Bachmann’s narrative apparently lacks coherence, it is undeniable that she has managed to gather quite the audience. Nonetheless, many people were turned off by the two arguments she relies on – religion, and exclusive, rather than equal, rights. Conservative supporters of same-sex marriage even turned her second argument upside down, making an appeal to inclusion and equal rights, rather than exclusivity. In media, this reversed narrative is embodied by S.E. Cupp (cf. supra). However, politicians have a much harder time coming out in favor against something a large part of their traditional constituents oppose. Yet, supporters are to be found in the

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<sup>135</sup> N. **Wing**, *Michele Bachmann Was Right! Gay Couples Will Marry in Minnesota* (May 14, 2013) [retrieved from the *Huffington Post* on May 7, 2014].

<sup>136</sup> C-SPAN 3, *House Republican Reaction to Supreme Court Ruling on Same-Sex Marriage* (June 26, 2013)

<sup>137</sup> Obamacare and DOMA are obviously two entirely different pieces of legislation. Therefore, the importance of the comparison between these two bills lies solely in revealing Bachmann’s incoherent argumentation.

political arena as well, even though they do not seem to shout as loud. If not the most vocal, than at least the most prominent Republican supporter of same-sex marriage is former Vice-President Dick Cheney. Even though, up till 2014, the GOP officially opposes same-sex marriage, Cheney already came out in support of it during the 2000 Vice-Presidential debate against Democratic opponent Joe Lieberman:

*“The fact of the matter is that we live in a free society, and freedom means freedom for everybody. [...] That means people should be free to enter into any kind of relationship they want to enter into. It’s no one’s business in terms of regulating behavior in that regard.”*<sup>138</sup>

Hereby, Cheney not only created a remarkable situation where he, as Republican contender for the Vice-Presidency, came across as more progressive than his Democratic counterpart; he also kicked off the whole debate about marriage equality. Obviously, efforts had been ongoing for a long time, and they became much stronger many years after Cheney’s statements. However, Cheney was the first prominent and active right-wing politician who came out in support of same-sex marriage – relying on a libertarian argument (cf. *infra*) – at a time when same-sex marriage was not yet legal anywhere in the world, let alone the United States. Hence, the context of this quote was just as important, if not more important, than its content. In essence, this quote took the same-sex marriage debate in the United States to a new level, regardless whether the content or the context is considered to be the most important aspect of it. Essentially, Cheney appealed in 2000 to what has previously been described as a libertarian narrative. And similar to Cupp and Beck, he explicitly states that that no one – meaning, certainly not the government – has any issue with people’s individual choices concerning marriage. Cheney thus denies that – as Chamie and Mirkin have phrased the main opposing argument – *“same-sex marriage is more than a private matter between two individuals.”*<sup>139</sup> Essentially, his argument appears to be similar to Beck’s, rather than Cupp’s, narrative. Nonetheless, it might seem hard to square his vision with the official policies of the administration he served. In the run-up to the 2004 election, President George W. Bush publicly endorsed a FMA on February 24, 2004. Moreover, he even made it a campaign theme playing into the widespread disapproval with the Massachusetts court ruling that legalized same-sex marriage. Cheney, being father to a lesbian daughter and public supporter of same-sex marriage nevertheless decided to stay on the ticket for another four years. In order to do so, he had to curb his political stances, adopting a schizophrenic stance on the issue. Whilst campaigning on August 24, 2004, Cheney answered a question regarding same sex marriage that “[his] general

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<sup>138</sup> 2000 Vice Presidential Debate, *Cheney v. Lieberman* (October 5, 2000)

<sup>139</sup> J. **Chamie** and B. **Mirkin**, *art. cit.*, p. 544.

The quote continues as follows: “[...] it has considerable social, economic, political, and legal consequences for states, institutions, enterprises, nongovernmental organizations, and the broader public.”

*view is that freedom means freedom for everybody.*"<sup>140</sup> However, he also noted that President Bush, not he, would set out the policy in the next four years. He later added to have two daughters in which he and his wife have "*enormous pride*," yet publicly backed a draft version of the Republican platform that same day, regardless of the fact that it stated that "*We strongly support President Bush's call for a constitutional amendment that fully protects marriage.*"<sup>141</sup> Even though his position was not as hypocritical as Michele Bachmann's, it is undeniable that Cheney willfully renounced a part of his credibility when the issue of same-sex marriage was concerned. Nevertheless, he never let an opportunity pass to clearly differentiate between his personal vision and the Administration's policy.<sup>142</sup> Unsurprisingly, the issue came up once again during the Vice-Presidential debate. Exactly four years after the first debate – October 5, 2004 – Cheney reconfirmed his original stance, yet added another element that was to construct the second tier of his argument – "*States have regulated marriage.*"<sup>143</sup> He thus adopted a second narrative which relied on states' rights rather than libertarianism. Then again, Cheney kept silent for yet another four years, publicly supporting the Bush Administration's policy. However, after Cheney retired from politics, he spoke more openly about his vision on same-sex marriage, acknowledging that the Administration's policies prevented him from supporting same-sex marriage.<sup>144</sup> He also reconfirmed several personal positions taken during his Vice-Presidency, thereby relying on the two arguments he had developed during that time. Although Cheney frequently relies on a libertarian argument, he generally considers the issue handled by referring to the 2000 Vice Presidential debate where he has made his opinion known. However, Cheney does not mind to expand – and act on – his states' rights narrative. Cheney was quoted in June 2009 when delivering a speech at the National Press Club that the issue of same-sex marriage should be left to the states:

*"I think people ought to be free to enter into any kind of union they wish. Any kind of arrangement they wish. The question of whether or not there ought to be a federal statute to protect this, I don't support. I do believe that historically the way marriage has been regulated is at the state level. It has always been a state issue and I think that this is the way it ought to be."*<sup>145</sup>

Later, he acknowledged on ABC's *The View* that he was aware of the fact that different states might set out different policies, thereby creating divergence and inequality between states. Yet,

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<sup>140</sup> Archived Article CNN: *Cheney describes same-sex marriage as a state issue* (August 25, 2004) [retrieved from Internet Archive on May 7, 2014].

<sup>141</sup> R. **Toner**, *Cheney Stakes Out Stance on Gay Marriages* (August 25, 2004) [retrieved from the *New York Times* on May 7, 2014].

<sup>142</sup> C. **Wilcox**, P.R. **Brewer**, S. **Shames**, and C. **Lake**, "If I bend this far I will break? Public Opinion about same-sex marriage" In: C.A. **Rimmerman** and C. **Wilcox** (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>143</sup> 2004 Vice Presidential Debate, *Cheney v. Edwards* (October 5, 2004)

<sup>144</sup> S. **Zaimov**, *Dick Cheney Admits Politics Prevented Him From Supporting Gay Marriage* (July 30, 2012) [retrieved from *The Christian Post* on May 7, 2014].

<sup>145</sup> S. **Zaimov**, *art. cit.*, (July 30, 2012) [retrieved from *The Christian Post* on May 7, 2014].

Cheney “*certainly [does not have] a problem with it.*”<sup>146</sup> Whereas some might perceive such an attitude to be indifferent, the opposite is true. Indeed, Cheney chose to get actively involved in at least one attempt to legalize same-sex marriage in an individual state. Investigative research of the *Baltimore Sun* revealed that several state lawmakers were pressured to pass a bill legalizing same-sex marriage in Maryland. Even though most of the pressure was on Democratic delegates, the crucial vote turned out to be Republican. GOP delegate Wade Kach had indeed voted against the bill in committee two days before the official vote took place. Cheney has never confirmed his involvement – neither has he denied it – though the *Baltimore Sun* was able to confirm that Kach had changed his vote after being offered to opportunity to speak to Cheney. Cheney’s involvement might seem limited, but it provided the crucial seventy first vote – out of a hundred forty one delegates – for the bill to pass.<sup>147</sup> Later, additional sources confirmed Cheney’s involvement, which means he can rightly be credited for contributing to the legalization of same-sex marriage in the Old Line State.<sup>148</sup>

As an opposing voice to Bachmann’s dominant narrative within the Republican Party, Cheney provides a valid alternative; and just like Bachmann, he therefore relies on two distinct arguments. Obviously, these are completely different. Bachmann, on the one hand, relies on the conservative value of religion whereas, on the other, she appeals to a platform of exclusivity which ties in with what Chamie and Mirkin have described as a desire for social status.<sup>149</sup> Even though this argumentation is often used by supporters of same-sex marriage (cf. Cupp), it is, at the same time, an argument frequently used by conservative heterosexuals who wish to keep marriage an exclusive right, available to only them. Meanwhile, Cheney relies on a conservative libertarian argument on the one hand, whilst he appeals to an equally conservative states’ rights narrative on the other. Due to the fact that this picture remains incomplete, these arguments and narratives will be weighed against those supported by conservative organizations whose primary occupation lies in advocating marriage equality, as seen from a conservative stance.

Originally, there was only one prominent organization fitting this description – Log Cabin Republicans. However, the breakaway of GOProud in 2009 revealed a set of irreconcilable narratives and arguments that were used to advocate the same cause. Regardless of the recent split, conservative supporters of same-sex marriage have to applaud LCR’s efforts to make a conservative case for same-sex marriage, and to challenge the GOP establishment from within the party. Yet,

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<sup>146</sup> ABC, *The View* (September 13, 2011)

<sup>147</sup> A. **Linskey**, *Maryland lawmakers under national pressure on marriage bill* (February 17, 2012) [retrieved from the *Baltimore Sun* on May 7, 2014].

<sup>148</sup> P. **Stanley**, *Cheney, Other GOP Heavyweights Pushed for Passage of Md. Gay Marriage Bill* (February 21, 2012) [retrieved from *The Christian Post* on May 7, 2014].

<sup>149</sup> J. **Chamie** and B. **Mirkin**, *art. cit.*, p. 538.

LCR was not originally established to push the Republican Party into endorsing same-sex marriage. Like several other civil rights organizations, LCR was created as a reaction against a successful anti-gay movement that started with Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign in Dade County, FL. In turn, Bryant's effort had caused several states to ban homosexuals from holding teaching positions, an effort that sounded appealing to California Senator John Briggs. Briggs, a Republican, was considering a bid for the governorship and subsequently proposed a statewide ballot initiative to that exact same cause – the so-called Briggs initiative.<sup>150</sup> This has driven various loosely organized conservative LGBT organizations together, which then joined forces as Log Cabin Republicans. Ever since, LCR has advocated gay rights – and later same-sex marriage – from a conservative platform. Even though they tried to find Republican allies in Congress and steer the Republican Platform by endorsing Republican contenders for the Presidency, they originally were not very successful on the national level. In all fairness, one has to acknowledge the contextual difference between the 1980s and the twenty first century. It would fall nothing short of unreasonable to expect LCR pushing for same-sex marriage whilst its opponents had not even yet considered it as a threat to traditional marriage. Moreover, there was no public support whatsoever.<sup>151</sup> Even though LCR chapters were established across the country, the organization mainly committed itself to low-profile cases. A turning point arose in 1992. After years of powerlessly watching the Republican Platform denouncing LGBT-rights, LCR sent a signal to the party establishment by explicitly withholding the endorsement of President George H.W. Bush.<sup>152</sup> LCR did so because the organization presumably felt taken for granted by the GOP establishment. Undoubtedly, the particular event that triggered the denial to endorse any candidate was Bush's failure to denounce Pat Buchanan's anti-gay rhetoric at the Republican Convention in Houston that same year.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, this has not led to any changes in the Republican platform and, even though LCR phrases it nicer, they were kept of the national stage throughout the rest of the decade and obediently endorsed the 1996 Dole campaign, as well as the 2000 Bush campaign – and neither can be considered a champion for LGBT-rights. The real importance of LCR – especially in relation to this dissertation's principal question – only starts to manifest itself as late as 2004. That year, George W. Bush's call for a FMA jeopardized the support of LGBT-conservatives, and caused LCR to send another strong signal. For the second time, they refused to endorse a Republican candidate for the presidency. Christopher Barron, then political director at LCR, wrote an op-ed explaining

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<sup>150</sup> Log Cabin Republicans, *Our History* [retrieved from logcabin.org on May 8, 2014].

<sup>151</sup> GSS first polled public opinion regarding same-sex marriage in 1988. Then, public support was as low as 12.4%. Support among conservatives was even lower with as few as 8.8% of the respondents expressing support.

<sup>152</sup> L. Anderson, *Gays long loyal to GOP agonize over supporting Bush* (April 19, 2004) [retrieved from the *Chicago Tribune* on May 8, 2014].

<sup>153</sup> Log Cabin Republicans, *Our History* [retrieved from logcabin.org on May 8, 2014].

his organization's critical position: *"Instead of helping re-elect President Bush, Log Cabin has dedicated all its efforts to defending the Constitution."*<sup>154</sup> LCR was thus convinced that a FMA would damage the meaning of freedom and liberty, the key fundamentals of the American Constitution. Accordingly, LCR committed itself to *"advance the interests of the gay and lesbian community within the Republican Party of the United States of America [...]"* and began to seek Congressional allies.<sup>155</sup> The latter effort has led to eighteen supporters in the 113<sup>th</sup> United States Congress.<sup>156</sup> Remarkably, this group includes notable opponents of same-sex marriage such as Sen. Kelly Ayotte (R – NH), Sen. John McCain (R – AZ) and Rep. Peter King (R – NY2). Whereas this might be an illustration of 'making do with what you have', it also shows the continued weakness of LCR's position. Barron explained this position as necessary *"because without a two-party strategy it could take decades longer for gay people to achieve full equality."*<sup>157</sup> Such reasoning reveals strategic thinking on the one hand, but an extremely weak position on the other. This position was even further weakened when they endorsed the McCain/Palin ticket in 2008, despite having *"honest disagreements with Sen. McCain on a number of gay rights issues."*<sup>158</sup> Even though this is telling, a broader context further reveals LCR to be a powerless organization. For instance, LCR chose to endorse Republican frontrunner and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney in the 2012 presidential campaign, despite his track record on LGBT-issues. Whilst this record caused LCR to actively run an ad-campaign against Romney during the 2008 primaries, they now supported a candidate who not only opposed the repeal of 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' and supported a FMA, LCR also endorsed a candidate who has stated his opposition to so-called civil unions on multiple occasions.<sup>159</sup> Time and again, LCR spins the story – *"there is no appetite to pass or even consider that amendment"* – to hide the fact that their limited influence forces them to back candidates who publicly oppose the core values LCR stands for.

Accordingly, one could logically presume that Barron, together with Jimmy LaSalvia seceded from LCR to form GOProud as a result of all the above. Yet, the opposite seems true. Barron and

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<sup>154</sup> C. **Barron**, *A Big Question for Gay Republicans* (September 1, 2004) [retrieved from The Gay & Lesbian Review worldwide on May 8, 2014].

<sup>155</sup> Log Cabin Republicans, *About Us* [retrieved from logcabin.org on May 9, 2014].

The quote continues as follows: *"[...] It shall assist in the development and enactment of policies affecting the gay and lesbian community within the Republican Party and by municipal, state and federal government. Its membership shall advocate and support candidates, activities or initiatives which provide equal rights under law to persons who are gay or lesbian, promote nondiscrimination against or harassment of persons who are gay or lesbian, and encourage participation in the Republican Party by gay and lesbian Americans."*

<sup>156</sup> Log Cabin Republicans, *Allies in Congress* [retrieved from logcabin.org on May 9, 2014].

<sup>157</sup> C. **Barron**, *A Big Question for Gay Republicans* (September 1, 2004) [retrieved from The Gay & Lesbian Review worldwide on May 8, 2014].

<sup>158</sup> L. **Jacobson**, *Log Cabin Republicans Endorsing McCain Today* (September 2, 2008) [retrieved from Roll Call on May 9, 2014].

<sup>159</sup> L. **Shapiro**, *Log Cabin Republicans Endorse Mitt Romney* (October 23, 2012) [retrieved from The Huffington Post on May 9, 2014].



LaSalvia, an LCR Director of Programs and Policy, left because they grew dissatisfied with LCR's sole focus on an LGBT-agenda. Many, even conservative opponents of same-sex marriage such as Ann Coulter, applauded the establishment of GOProud for they all believed LCR had abnegated its conservative principles.<sup>160</sup> Hence, by 2009, LCR was neither conservative, nor effective. GOProud essentially appeals to the same conservative values of small government and absolute freedom, like LCR. Nonetheless, they have stepped up the game by focusing especially on marriage, and even make the one true conservative case for same-sex marriage. Whereas a libertarian, states' rights or inclusion narrative such as those adhered to by both politicians and media pundits perfectly tie in with the contemporary understanding of American conservatism, GOProud also appeals to a narrative that has not yet been discussed. Fundamentally, GOProud "*encourage[s] committed, stable relationships that promote healthy families and create value in our communities.*"<sup>161</sup> Phrased otherwise, GOProud thus promotes monogamous relationships and understands the nuclear family to be the foundation of any society. They thus "*reinforce the relationship between the two persons within the broader society,*" and make a true conservative case for marriage because, generally, this is exactly how most conservatives understand the role of marriage.<sup>162</sup> Though, GOProud has to make concessions and support, just like LCR, Republican heavyweights who publicly oppose same-sex marriage. On the one hand, this means they do not take a dogmatic stance and strive to maintain a respectful dialogue (cf. Cupp), whereas on the other, this has led to GOProud publicly celebrating Ann Coulter and Michele Bachmann. The former even became a member of the GOProud advisory council in 2011.<sup>163</sup> Not only does this seem to confirm Coulter's earlier statement that she is a "*friend of the gays,*" it also raises questions as to which direction GOProud intended to go. Whereas this decision is understandable and might even count on the support of many homosexual conservatives, the support for Congresswomen Bachmann seems much more controversial. The conservative gay rights organization decided to reach out to Michele Bachmann during her presidential campaign. LaSalvia said that "*[GOProud] wants to be helpful to whoever secures the GOP nomination [for] we are committed to defeating Barack Obama in 2012.*"<sup>164</sup> Even though Bachmann's campaign greatly resembled the non-social issues of GOProud's political platform, it remains disturbing that such an organization might even consider to compromise on the core of its existence – LGBT rights. Controversy further arose when Christopher Barron defended

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<sup>160</sup> A. **Coulter**, *Dear Mainstream Media reporter who wasted my time* (February 9, 2011) [retrieved from Human Events on May 9, 2014].

<sup>161</sup> GOProud, *Position on Marriage* [retrieved from goproud.org on May 9, 2014].

<sup>162</sup> J. **Chamie** and B. **Mirkin**, *art. cit.*, p. 539.

<sup>163</sup> S. **Amuel**, *Ann Coulter Joins Advisory Council of GOP Homosexual Group* (August 10, 2011) [retrieved from *The Christian Post* on May 9, 2014].

<sup>164</sup> C. **Moody**, *Gay conservative group reaches out to Bachmann* (July 18, 2011) [retrieved from Yahoo! News on May 9, 2014].

that position in an interview with CNN's Ali Velshi. Barron said to be "*troubled*" by certain statements Bachmann has made as a state Senator and a Congresswomen, yet he believes that "*the attacks on Michele Bachmann and her family* [Bachmann and her husband run 'Bachmann & Associates', an organization that can allegedly cure the gayness of their patients] *by the gay left have absolutely nothing to do with gay rights. [...] The truth is that [these attacks] are nothing more than part and parcel of an orchestrated effort by the left to destroy the Tea Party.*"<sup>165</sup> Being blindsided by the fear of a Democratic victory in November 2012, both LaSalvia and Barron found themselves – and their organization – willing to consider supporting the women who once publicly said that being gay is "*part of Satan.*"<sup>166</sup> When confronted with that statement on NBC's 'Meet the Candidate', Bachmann responded that she ascribes "*honor and dignity to every person, no matter what their background,*" which automatically prompted Barron to send a euphoric tweet stating: "*Bravo to Rep. Bachmann this morning for her honor & dignity of gay people.*" Even though GOProud might have considered that to be a victory, Barron essentially praised Bachmann for saying that gay people are also people. Given that Bachmann's campaign ended before primary season actually took off, GOProud threw its support behind another candidate – Mitt Romney. Although both LCR and GOProud fell in line behind the moderate conservative establishment candidate, both organizations were repudiated by the conservative hardliners they tried to please. The American Conservative Union (ACU) denied both organizations' requests to formally attend the 2012 Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) after GOProud's attendance in 2011 had caused several social conservative groups to boycott the event. Even though many stamped the ACU's stance as bigoted, they reconfirmed their decision regarding the 2013 edition of CPAC. After this had led to a boycott by several prominent conservatives, the ACU ostensibly seemed willing to compromise and allow both LCR and GOProud to attend the 2014 edition – but only as guests, without sponsorship or a booth.<sup>167</sup> Essentially, this offer was nothing but a decoy as it clearly denies any formal attendance. Nevertheless, GOProud took the bait. Ross Hemminger and Matt Bechstein, the new GOProud leadership accepted the ACU's hollow offer which led co-founder Christopher Barron to publicly distance himself from the organization he founded. Even though he was the one willing to support a Bachmann presidency, he released a statement that he resigned from the GOProud board because:

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<sup>165</sup> CNN, *America Morning* (July 19, 2011)

<sup>166</sup> NBC, *Meet the Candidate – Michele Bachmann* (August 8, 2011)

The statement itself was made at the 2004 EdWatch National Education conference, but Bachmann was confronted with the statement on the 2012 Iowa Caucus Campaign Trail.

<sup>167</sup> B. **Reinhard**, *CPAC Welcomes Gay-Rights Groups After Years of Exclusion* (February 19, 2014) [retrieved from National Journal on May 9, 2014].

*“I cannot in good conscience sit by and watch current leadership of the organization disingenuously pawns off an unconditional surrender to the forces of bigotry as some sort of ‘compromise [...]”*<sup>168</sup>

A similar argument was made a month earlier by LaSalvia who left both GOProud and the Republican Party to become an independent conservative. Just like Barron, LaSalvia mentioned the tolerance of bigotry in the GOP as one of the reasons for doing so. When Hemminger and Bechstein later chose to accept CPAC’s offer, LaSalvia told Slate’s David Weigel he would not accept a “*three-fifths invitation to CPAC*” if he were still running the organization.<sup>169</sup> Clearly, GOProud has chosen a new direction after both its founders have left. Given that the new leadership seems to accept a submissive position in the contemporary conservative constellation, one could rightfully ask whether same-sex marriage has not lost the battle within the Republican Party. Meanwhile, LCR has lashed out against the ACU’s offer by saying that “*We don’t need the ACU. The ACU needs us.*”<sup>170</sup> LCR executive director Gregory T. Angelo made it clear that he expected any formal LCR participation to be meaningful, and that therefore, LCR will stop seeking to participate in the annual High Mass of American conservatism.

Thus, one of these organizations has surrendered to the opponents of same-sex marriage in the Republican Party; and this same organization has agreed to continue its fight for marriage equality from under the thumb of a right-wing platform that is still committed to impose a FMA. The other organization has chosen not to surrender. LCR has cut itself loose from this anti-same-sex marriage narrative that seems to dominate the Republican Party. It has, in a way, also accepted it no longer has a role to play in the Republican debate on same-sex marriage. Despite the efforts both GOProud and LCR have made throughout their history, and despite the efforts they will make in their future, same-sex marriage is not going to receive formal Republican support anytime soon. Yes, it is undeniable that both make a conservative case for same-sex marriage. Yes, it is undeniable that they have known success. But it is also undeniable that, despite every effort they put in, they have hit a wall – time and again. And they will continue to do so, at least in the foreseeable future. The majority of prominent Republicans – even the so-called ‘moderates’ – continue to

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<sup>168</sup> C. **Geidner**, *GOProud Founder Chris Barron Quits Board Over CPAC Flap* (February 20, 2014) [retrieved from BuzzFeed on May 9, 2014].

The statement continues as follows: “[...] *Nothing has changed in regards to GOProud and CPAC. GOProud does not have a booth, they are not a sponsor, they are not participating in any formal sense – individual members can attend and that’s exactly the terms ACU dictated the previous few years.*”

<sup>169</sup> D. **Weigel**, *Former GOProud Head Not Impressed With CPAC’s New Gay ‘Inclusion’* (February 19, 2014) [retrieved from Slate on May 9, 2014].

<sup>170</sup> G.T. **Angelo**, *The truth about CPAC and gay conservatives* (March 5, 2014) [retrieved from The Daily Caller on May 9, 2014].

fiercely oppose the legalization of same-sex marriage and support at least one of Bachmann's narratives. Even though she is not exactly a middle-of-the-road Republican, her religious and exclusive rights arguments seem to largely unite the Republican Party establishment on at least one issue. Moreover, even after she leaves Congress in January 2015, the party establishment will still follow the course she represented. Yet, homosexual conservatives have still some representation in politics. Same-sex marriage might not be supported by the majority of high-ranking Republicans, which does not mean supporters cannot count on the lone voices – exemplified by Dick Cheney – to serve their interests from a conservative angle. Indeed, his libertarian and states' rights narratives are widely supported, not only by GOProud and LCR, but also by influential pundits such as Cupp and Beck.

## CONCLUSION

*“The fight over same-sex marriage represents a competition over socially constructed meanings, as groups and individuals on both sides of the issue struggle to define the meanings of marriage, sexuality, morality, and civil rights, and to assert their own definitions of the situations in the face of organized opposition.”<sup>171</sup>*

Anno 2014, probably no social issue is more volatile than the position of marriage within American society. Even if only taking account of the odd half year I spent working on this dissertation, it is undeniable that the traditional definition of marriage is 'under attack'.<sup>172</sup> Poll numbers have shown that the number of supporters of same-sex marriage increases slowly but consequently, whereas judges both *de facto* and *de jure* have changed the definition of marriage. Though many legal rulings handed down since the beginning of 2014 have been stayed while pending appeal, District Court rulings in Oregon and Pennsylvania have effectively changed the institution of marriage for millions of Americans.<sup>173</sup> Nonetheless; opposition, especially from the political and ideological right, remains fierce. No longer do right-wing opponents solely face resistance from the liberal left; they also have to deal with increasing criticism on the right as well. Throughout this dissertation, I have provided the reader with what I considered to be the seven most important conservative narratives in the ongoing societal debate on same-sex marriage. All these various lines of argumentation have been represented by either a person or an organization who best

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<sup>171</sup> R. McVeigh and M-E.D. Diaz, *art. cit.*, p. 892.

<sup>172</sup> I started my research in the aftermath of the New Mexico Supreme Court ruling in *Griego v. Oliver* in December 2013. This dissertation was completed and submitted for grading on May 27, 2014.

<sup>173</sup> Unlike similar rulings in Arkansas, Idaho, Michigan, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah, Virginia, the court rulings in Oregon and Pennsylvania have not been stayed.

represents a certain narrative by actively fueling the debate on the right. First of all, two opposing narratives were discussed here. On the surface, Coulter's and Bachmann's narrative seem to have quite a great deal in common. For instance, it is clear that Bachmann's exclusive rights argument resembles Coulter's equal rights argument. Yet, as a result of a different focus – and the different realities that distinguish media and politics – both end up arguing the same case from an entirely different angle – exclusion v. inclusion. Bachmann further strengthens her narrative with religious argumentation, whereas Coulter, though an evangelical Christian as well, barely mentions religious conviction to support her case. Moreover, instead of convicting homosexuality on religious grounds, Coulter attempts to include the LGBT community for, just like S.E. Cupp, Coulter believes them to be natural conservatives. Even so, she does not believe they have the right to marry for marriage is simply not a right. The Coulter narrative presumes marriage to be an institution that protects the family which is, according to true conservative understanding, the cornerstone of every society. This places Coulter's narrative directly at odds with the case GOProud makes from within the Republican constellation (cf. *infra*). Second of all, four supportive narratives were discussed here, and all of them relied on similar though distinguishable argumentation. Cupp's mediated narrative relies on three arguments: inclusion, libertarianism, and states' rights – in that order of importance. All three arguments are to be found in the narratives represented by Dick Cheney and LCR as well, though their political affiliation has caused them to deploy them in a different way. Cheney primarily relies on libertarian argumentation to defend his position, and the fact that he generally does not expatiate as much on the issue as most other supporters – or opponents for that matter – clearly illustrates that he truly believes marriage is a personal matter. Generally, no one but the two conducting parties should be part of the institution of marriage which is first of all a personal, rather than a societal, issue. Though this is no ideological conservative rhetoric – it is libertarianism – it clearly fits the political definition of American conservatism. States' rights further strengthens the conservative case both Cupp and Cheney make. Cupp's prime argument – inclusion – is a mix of ideological libertarianism and conservatism, an argument she shares with LCR. Both clearly believe in the creed of 'freedom and liberty for all' which inherently presumes equal freedoms and liberties. Regarding GOProud, it might be expected that they had adopted LCR's narrative with a slightly different focus. However, their clear focus on committed, stable monogamous relationships is, seen from an ideological viewpoint, more conservative than the several libertarian arguments adhered to by Cupp, Cheney, and LCR. This is in no way an attack on the conservative credentials of the aforesaid, but begs to differ between ideological and political conservatism. Only the latter does indeed leave room for a fusion between traditionalism and libertarianism. Third of all, there is Glenn Beck. It is hard to fit Beck within either of the two foregoing categories given his unique though significant stance. His libertarian conservative narrative clearly falls outside the ideological boundaries of conservatism – it remains within its political

boundaries – which makes his line of argumentation slightly different than the one argued by Cupp, Cheney, and LCR. Rather than personal support for same-sex marriage, it is Beck's consequent belief in libertarian conservatism that has led him to adopt his 'not against' narrative.

All in all, the purpose of this dissertation was to ascertain whether there is indeed a social realignment on the political right. So far, it has become clear that there is at least some dissent between fellow conservatives, though the question remains in whose favor the balance will ultimately tilt. The rising support in all layers of society and the public endorsement of notable conservative firebrands such as Dick Cheney seem to suggest it is only a matter of time before same-sex marriage will be legal – which is not the same as supported – all throughout the United States. The conservative narratives of Cupp, Beck, Cheney, LCR, and GOProud certainly seem to suggest a realignment on the right. Though it is slow and gradual, it is a realignment nonetheless. Over the past decade, more conservatives have become gradually acceptant of same-sex marriage, and even when one takes account of the fact that "*today, marriage is the frame through which the anti-gay movement talks about gay people and gay rights issues*,"<sup>174</sup> it is highly likely that the civil rights issue of the twenty first century will be settled in favor of marriage equality before long. Obviously, realignment has deeper causes than five of the seven narratives analyzed above. Realignment indeed marks a change in ideological and/or political thinking, and it is crucial to understand the underlying foundations for this change. One possible explanation seems to be the disappearance of 'old-school' conservatism. Another holds that this branch of conservatism still constitutes the core of present day conservatism, but has adapted throughout the decade. Essentially, the latter option seems to suggest the inclusion of progressive ideas within conservative thinking whereas the former suggests that 'old-school' conservatism is disappearing after adhering to the liberal adage of government involvement. In my opinion, both are true. That indeed means that 'old-school' conservatism might be shrinking which is a result of the Bachmann-narrative losing credibility as time evolves. Less and less people do indeed believe that hurricanes or floods are a result of LGBT couples getting married. And although these people might still not approve of same-sex marriage, they will gradually distance themselves from Bachmann's narrative, and change to one that seems more credible, whether that's represented by Coulter, Beck, or even any of the four supporters analyzed here. Moreover, Bachmann's strong plea to keep government involved in the issue of marriage depends on liberal policies. Others then rely on libertarian means rather than a true ideological conservative take on the issue. Accordingly, only Coulter and GOProud can be correctly credited with an ideological take on the issue. Presuming that 'old-school' conservatism is not adapting to the changing needs of time would consequently mean a denial of Beck's, Cupp's, Cheney's, and LCR's conservative credentials. After having analyzed and studied

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<sup>174</sup> S. Cahill, "The anti-gay marriage movement" In: C.A. Rimmerman and C. Wilcox (eds.), *op. cit.*, p. 166.

their respective narratives, it is my belief that they are just as conservative as Bachmann, Coulter, and GOProud. There is thus no need to dismiss conservative supporters should one admit that ‘old-school’ conservatism has indeed adapted and that its base of core adherents is getting smaller every day.

In no way should this be interpreted as the ‘loss’ of conservatism in the United States. Earlier, I have already distinguished between ideological and political conservatism. All narratives analyzed in this dissertation are certainly conservative in the latter sense of the word. As for the former, it is my belief that they can be given that on the one hand ‘old-school’ conservatism is weakening whilst on the other, it is also adapting to societal change. Consequently, this social realignment not only suggest that, ultimately, a clear majority of conservative Americans will be supportive of same-sex marriage – even though conservatism might not mean the same as it did a decade ago. In order to put this in perspective: although conservatism dwells on the preservation of, amongst other things, institutions, it is undeniable that 1980s conservatism was different from 1920s conservatism. Yet, both are still dubbed conservatism without anyone pointing to the clear distinctions between both historical understandings of conservatism. Therefore, it is realistic to foresee a different understanding of conservatism in the future, without that term than being put in doubt regarding its understanding of conservatism. An important note to keep in mind is that the understanding of conservatism today is almost as volatile as the definition of marriage. Conservative support for same-sex marriage is indeed in a steep climb, and the American media is not exactly in need of conservative supporters of same-sex marriage.<sup>175</sup> Yet, when it comes to politics, conservative supporters still have a long way to go there. More than in the broad layers of society or the media is this ‘old-school’ conservatism still present in Washington, thus preventing a bipartisan dialogue. However, supporters might have time on their side. As the electorate changes – and the Tea Party loses ground – a Republican voting base will gradually come to support same-sex marriage. Moreover, a clear majority of Republicans under 29 already does so.<sup>176</sup> Nonetheless, as long as an absolute majority – currently pending at 61% – keeps opposing same-sex marriage, one should not expect a change in the Republican position. As for now, whenever a gay conservative steps into a voting booth, he or she will have to prioritize. Either, one relies on his or her conservative socio-economic understanding of society and votes a Republican to the state capitol or Washington; or, one fully commits him-/herself to a plea for marriage equality and votes against his or her own socio-economic understanding of society.

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<sup>175</sup> According to the *Washington Post*-ABC News poll, conservative support for same-sex marriage has risen from 29% in 2012 to 39% in 2014

<sup>176</sup> Pew Research – Religion & Public Life Project surveys shows that 61% of Republicans between 18 and 29 years old support same-sex marriage.

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