IN DEFENSE OF LOVE AND SAME-SEX PARENTING:
RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE APOLOGIA FROM CHILDREN OF SAME-SEX COUPLES

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IN DEFENSE OF LOVE AND SAME-SEX PARENTING:
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ABSTRACT

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With the acceptance of same-sex marriage on the rise in American society and an increasing number of homosexual couples raising children, concerns regarding the effect these couples have on their children are also escalating. This study looks at a unique defense of same-sex couples as parents, from the children currently being raised by them. Including three prominent texts and seventeen different voices, an analysis was completed to understand what defense strategies children use as advocates for their parents’ right to marriage and to be a family. The method of study included completing a genre criticism through close textual analysis of the texts. In particular, the genre of apologia was studied. The analysis was framed by queer theory in effort to detect how, if at all, the defenses of children from same-sex parented homes rejected heteronormativity and the binary of sexuality. The findings of this study included the use of three different strategies of apologia, which allowed the children to defend their parents in three ways: by normalizing their family life and showing their parents do positive things; by depicting their lives as different, but not abnormal; and by redefining family to be constructed by love, instead of the biological components of the people within.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In 2013 a majority of citizens supported equal rights for same-sex couples for the first time in American history. A 2013 *NBC/Wall Street Journal* poll showed that 53 percent of Americans were in favor of same-sex marriage.\(^1\) A *New York Times* article quoted scholar Jonathan Rauch as saying, “We’re seeing a shift in public morality.”\(^2\) This changing mindset of America, as well as the increasing number of court rulings and state legalizations of same-sex marriage, characterized gay rights as the “civil rights issue of our time.”\(^3\) The 2013 overturning of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) further emphasized the importance of same-sex marriage within society. DOMA, established in 1996, was the first federal law concerning the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and

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\(^3\) Mike Bloomberg, “Remarks by Mayor Mike Bloomberg at Stanford University’s 122\(^{nd}\) Annual Commencement,” Stanford, CA, June 16, 2013, http://www.mikebloomberg.com/index.cfm?objectid=4E22E5B7-C29C-7CA2-F4548DEF072EFA62
transgender (LGBT) community.\textsuperscript{4} Section three of the bill stated: “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.”\textsuperscript{5} Thus, DOMA prevented the federal government from recognizing marriages or providing benefits to two people of the same sex.

Even President Bill Clinton showed an apparent change of heart with regard to this issue. According to \textit{The New Yorker}, prior to signing the bill Clinton was the first president to gain support from the gay community while campaigning for office.\textsuperscript{6} A 2013 \textit{New Yorker} article stated that “he was then one of the national politicians most conversant on gay-equality issues.”\textsuperscript{7} Yet, these actions did not carry over when DOMA was introduced in 1996, when Clinton signed the bill alone in his office in September.\textsuperscript{8} However, though signing DOMA into place, Clinton also later led support for the bill’s invalidation in 2013. When the bill was struck down as unconstitutional, Clinton clarified the reasoning behind his new position. He explained that DOMA was signed during “a very different time,” when same-sex marriages were not a prominent issue for the public.\textsuperscript{9} In an editorial for \textit{The Washington Post} he stated, “As the president who signed

\textsuperscript{4} H.R. 3396, 140th Cong. (1996).
\textsuperscript{5} H.R. 3396, 140th Cong. (1996).
\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibid.
the act into law, I have come to believe that DOMA is contrary to those principles and, in fact, incompatible with our Constitution.”

The president’s claim that DOMA was passed during a different time is illustrated by the equal rights advancements made in the seventeen years since the bill’s signing. There were two advances of particular note. The first was that during the span of the bill’s enforcement, despite the lack of federal acknowledgement and support, thirteen states legalized same-sex marriage. The second was the growth of families headed by same-sex couples. Therefore, as the number of homosexual parents increased and the legalization of same-sex marriage spread, the issue for equal rights activists became advocating for marriage equality and the homosexual parents.

Among those speaking out were the children of same-sex parents. These children had the unique experience of being raised at the forefront of the battle for marriage equality, by the people struggling to be seen as equal. They offered a unique perspective into the lives of same-sex couples by speaking in defense of their parents, against the claims that same-sex parents cannot properly raise a child and that families headed by homosexual couples is an abnormal family form. I examined a collection of these statements using the genre of apologia, and illustrate how they not only defend same-sex couples, but also debunk the binaries of sexuality and family. In this initial chapter, I

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12 Kristy M. Krivickas and Daphne Lofquist, “Demographics of Same-Sex Couple Households with Children,” (PowerPoint presentation, annual meeting of the Population Association of America, U.S. Census Bureau, Fertility & Family Statistics Branch, April 1, 2011).
provide a brief overview of the context in which this issue occurred. I then briefly outline the method of analysis, which consisted of studying the texts as a genre of apologia through the lens of queer theory. Finally, I provide details about the texts used.

**DOMA**

The seventeen-year span in which section three of DOMA was enforced underscored a changing era for equal rights. This section describes this period by first highlighting the year in which DOMA was instituted. Next, I show the changes that took place surrounding the overturning of the law, and how those changes spotlighted the prominence of homosexual parents. I then provide a description of the American family standard, the alternative family forms, and how the perceived differences between them are applicable and important to this study.

Though gay rights could be seen as a significant societal issue throughout the 1960’s, 70’s, 80’s and early 90’s, it wasn’t until 1996 that the United States introduced the first federal bill concerning the gay community’s right to marriage. This bill, the Defense of Marriage Act, barred recognition of same-sex marriage by the federal government. Proposed in response to the Hawaii state court case, *Baehr v. Miike*, where three same-sex couples sued for the right to marry and were denied on the basis of sexual orientation, DOMA was intended to “define and protect the institution of marriage” through providing a legal definition of marriage. A 1996 *Washington Post* article cites

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17 Ibid.
conservatives claiming that such unions “present an imminent threat to society.”\textsuperscript{18} DOMA stated that marriage may not consist of a union between two women or two men, thus implying that such marriages would be harmful to the institution of marriage.

During 1996, prior to the signing of DOMA, the United States saw a large amount of activity surrounding gay rights. In May, the Supreme Court showed a sympathetic ear for the first time toward equal rights by ruling against a Colorado amendment banning gay-rights legislation.\textsuperscript{19} The court held that the state of Colorado could not single out homosexuals in housing and employment. \textit{USA Today} reported that this “ruling marked the first time that a majority of the court said something positive about the rights of homosexuals.”\textsuperscript{20} While many who opposed the gay-rights movement believed that “activists [were] exaggerating the importance of the ruling,”\textsuperscript{21} the gay community saw it as a signal of a turning tide in public opinion.\textsuperscript{22}

Following the Colorado ruling, in September 1996 the Supreme Court voted in favor of the Employment Nondiscrimination Act, which protected workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{23} It was during this time that the focus of gay rights activists turned primarily toward same-sex marriage.\textsuperscript{24} Same-sex marriages had yet to be legalized

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[20] Tony Mauro, “Decision May Shift Course of Civil Rights Law.”
\item[21] Ibid.
\item[22] Ibid; Tony Mauro, “Ruling is Ammunition, Gay-Rights Activists Say,” \textit{USA Today}, May 1996.
\item[24] Vobejda, “Same-Sex Marriage Becomes Political Issue.”
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
in any state within the United States\textsuperscript{25} and same-sex marriage advocates believed that Americans would see the right to marriage as outside the concern of equal rights.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, they saw a need to advocate more strongly for the right to marriage. A 1996 \textit{New York Times} article reported that “the emotional nature of same-sex marriage,”\textsuperscript{27} as well as the appearance of 34 state bills attempting to bar gay marriage and the then-still impending state of DOMA, raised the importance of the issue for advocates.

As gay marriage became more important for gay-rights activists, it also became a more prominent social issue. Though DOMA was the law for the next seventeen years, the bill’s existence did not stop states from legalizing same-sex marriage. However, DOMA did prevent legal state marriages from receiving recognition across state lines and also withheld any federal benefits from those marriages. This meant states had the individual right to legalize same-sex marriages, but these marriages would only be valid by and within that state, and would receive no federal support. Thirteen states – including two of the largest states, California and New York\textsuperscript{28} – legalized same-sex marriage, and over 43% of the population lived in a state that provided some form of protection for gay couples by the time of the 2013 DOMA ruling.\textsuperscript{29}

Though the prominence of same-sex marriage grew between 1996 and 2013, the overturning of DOMA opened new opportunities for current and future same-sex couples. DOMA’s invalidation allowed for married same-sex couples to receive spousal health

\textsuperscript{25} Schmitt, “Senate Weighs Bill on Gay Rights on the Job;” Vobejda, “Same- Sex Marriage Becomes Political Issue.”
\textsuperscript{26} Vobejda, “Same-Sex Marriage Becomes Political Issue.”
\textsuperscript{27} Eric Schmitt, “Senate Weighs Bill on Gay Rights on the Job.”
\textsuperscript{28} “Population Clock,” \textit{United States Census Bureau}, updated 2013, http://www.census.gov/PopClock/
insurance, support for military spouses, and the right to file jointly on taxes, among other things. On a less technical level, GLAAD, the leading voice of LGBT advocacy, said that these federal benefits would strengthen the families of all couples by allowing them to create more stable environments for their families. Families headed by homosexual parents, in particular, had an increasing need for stabilization due to the growth rate of children brought up in households of same-sex couples.

The Homosexual Parent

As the issue of same-sex marriage became more prominent, the United States also saw a rise in the number of same-sex parents. Despite a growth in numbers, and the rising support for same-sex marriage, homosexual parents were not viewed in a positive light. Though various studies on children of same-sex parents showed results that signaled no significant difference between the children of heterosexual and homosexual parents, the argument remained that same-sex couples could not adequately raise

31 GLAAD was previously an acronym for ‘Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation,’ but did away with the acronym, becoming simply ‘GLAAD,’ in March 2013 in order to be more inclusive of the LGBT community and allies. “GLAAD Affirms Commitment to Trans People, LGBT Community and Allies on Melissa Harris-Perry Show,” GLAAD, March 24, 2013, http://www.glaad.org/blog/glaad-affirms-commitment-trans-people-lgbt-community-and-allies-melissa-harris-perry-show
33 “Frequently Asked Questions: Defense of Marriage Act,” GLAAD.
children or provide them with stable family lives because they did not fall under the umbrella of the societal family norm. This societal family norm was often referred to as the “nuclear” family, which consisted of the stereotypical two parents, of opposite sex, parenting their own biological children. With the nuclear family idealized as the “norm,” there existed a societal belief that this family form constituted the majority of American families. However, as far back as 2000, the majority of families in America consisted of “abnormal” family forms. Abnormal family forms, using a binary definition, were any structure existing outside of the perceived norm. This could refer to parents with adopted children, single-mothers or fathers, families whose grandparents live in the same household, or – more controversially – families headed by same-sex couples.

Due to its alternative structure and abnormality, and in comparison to the perceived norm, the families with same-sex parents were viewed as unstable and negatively influential to the children raised within. However, a 2010 study found that “children raised in same-sex parented families are at least equal to those of their heterosexual parented peers.” This same study also suggested that “it is processes within the family […] that contribute to higher levels of wellbeing among children, irrespective

41 Sandra Timmermann, “What Ever Happened to the Nuclear Family?”
of parents’ sexual orientation.” That is, it was not the sexual orientation of a parent that decided the well-being of a child, but the general concept of what a family is or does.

This study analyzes the rhetoric of same-sex children to show how they describe their families both in relation and comparison to the heterosexual family, and how they attempt to debunk the binaries of family and reject the notion of heteronormativity. In order to do so, they show that same-sex parented families are no different than families of the American archetype, by defining their families not by their parents’ sexual orientation, but by love. The second chapter of this study, the context chapter, elaborates on these ideas and concepts in greater specificity. It expands on the relevant legal issues by describing four major court cases and detailing both the standard and alternative family forms, with special attention to same-sex parents and their families.

Method

This section will provide an overview of the method used within this study, which involved the evaluation of how the texts employed the genre of apologia as framed by queer theory. To properly and briefly outline this method, I clarify apologia as a form of genre, explain queer theory as a study, and then show how the connection between the two allows for a more targeted analysis of family and sexuality.

The texts used in this study all fall under the same category of discourse, which allows them to be grouped as a genre. Campbell and Jamieson state, “Genres are groups

of discourses which share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics.\footnote{Karlyn K. Campbell and Kathleen H. Jamieson, “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism,” in Readings in Rhetorical Criticism (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2010), 453.} The texts were all presented by children of same-sex parents in the public forum in opposition to the denial of rights to same-sex couples. By analyzing these texts as a genre, their similar characteristics allow for conclusions about the group as opposed to the individual texts.\footnote{Ibid, 447.} Therefore, I conducted a generic criticism in order to understand how the rhetoric of children raised by same-sex parents uniquely defended their parentage. In particular, this study looks at the genre of apologia.

Apologia is a form of genre that concerns speeches of self-defense.\footnote{B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia,” in Readings in Rhetorical Criticism (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2010), 462.} Ware and Linkugel describe the situation that calls for apologia as “an attack upon a person’s character, upon his worth as a human being” and state that this attack demands a direct response.\footnote{Ibid, 462.} This response is called apologia, the defense of morals against an accusation. Blaney and Benoit present five strategies of apologia: denial, evading responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of an event, corrective action and mortification.\footnote{Joseph R. Blaney and William L. Benoit, The Clinton Scandals and the Politics of Image Restoration (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 15.} The methods chapter, chapter three, will detail each of these five strategies, explaining their sub-strategies and the differences between them, as well as providing examples to illustrate how a person utilizes them.

The self-defense called upon in this study was against the claims that same-sex parents shouldn’t have the right to marry or to be a family, and this defense was
presented not by the parents themselves, but by their children. They responded to any preconceived notion of what it means to be a family, in an attempt to overcome heteronormative ideas and exclusive viewpoints through the reduction of negative perceptions concerning families with same-sex parents. In this study, I analyze how these texts utilize the strategies of apologia, and conclude that their defenses worked to form a more inclusive idea of family.

To better understand how these texts created an inclusive perception of family through apologia, the discourses were studied within the frame of queer theory. Queer theory explores texts to critically analyze existing binary thinking. Through the lens of queer theory, a critic looks at what rhetorical tools a text uses to subvert identity categories. The objective of queer theory is to deconstruct heteronormativity to alleviate the perception that homosexuality is this so-called ‘other,’ or the abnormal alternative, within society. Schenider and Roncolato state that queer theory “works to expose the inherent instability of all sexual identities, including the heterosexual, and it works to construct categories of thought that allow for greater fluidity, multiplicity, and change.”

Queer theory thus aims to debunk the notion that there is normality to heterosexuality which is not present within homosexuality, through the elimination of heteronormativity.

Anyone who ignores the binaries or resists the notion of heterosexuality as the norm is considered to be “queering,” or denying the idea of heteronormativity. At its

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48 Schneider and Roncolato, “Queer Theologies,” 2.
49 Schneider and Roncolato, “Queer Theologies,” 2.
most basic, queering is defined as a “resistance against heterosexual knowing.” Queering is not about only pointing out the inequalities between homosexual and heterosexual couples, but about showing that these inequalities arise from the belief that heterosexuality is the natural or normal state of society, and that homosexuality lies opposite of this normality. It is about eliminating the binaries of sexuality, meaning homosexuality must be demystified and removed from the state of abnormal, thus putting both orientations on equal ground.

Therefore, this study framed the analysis through queer theory to show how children of same-sex parents employed apologia to defend homosexuality and redefine the social norm as inclusive of families headed by homosexual couples. The third chapter describes genre theory, apologia and queer theory in greater depth, to better illustrate the applied method of study.

Texts

I applied this method of study to a variety of testimonies and speeches from same-sex children. The first text that will be used is a speech by Zach Wahls, given on February 1, 2011 to the Iowa House of Representatives, in response to the House meeting to vote on an amendment appealing the 2009 Iowa State Court ruling which allowed same-sex couples to marry. Wahls, then a 19 year-old Iowa citizen raised by a lesbian couple, spoke out in defense of his parents and all same-sex couples of Iowa.

The second text that I included was a Supreme Court amicus brief submitted in March 2013 by the Family Equality Council (in part with GLSEN, COLAGE, Our

\footnote{Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, “Thinking Theology and Queer Theory,” 305.}
Family Coalition, the Center on Children and Families and the Child Rights Project). The Family Equality Council filed the brief “in support of Edie Windsor – who is challenging the constitutionality of the so-called ‘Defense of Marriage Act.’” This brief presented the testimony of 15 children of same-sex parents speaking of their experiences being raised by lesbian or gay couples. This text offered many different statements from same-sex children, all of which maintain the idea that their families are no different from heterosexually parented families.

One final text, a 2013 letter from Daniel Martinez-Leffew, then age 12, to Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts, is also included. Martinez-Leffew’s letter describes his adoption by his two fathers and what it has meant for his life, and he urged Roberts to end the ban on gay marriage by saying, “Imagine the pain we would feel knowing that we are not considered equal to everyone else.” Just as Zach Wahls and the children included in the amicus brief, Martinez-Leffew attempted to eradicate the binary that existed between heterosexual and homosexual parents.

I analyzed how these texts utilized apologia to reshape the societal view of families. Showing the characteristics that similarly exist between the three texts illustrated how this distinctive group of speakers defended same-sex marriage and how those distinct defenses reframed the binaries and reshaped the accepted societal idea of what defines a family.

OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The chapters appear in the following order: context, methods, analysis and conclusion. As this chapter served as an overview of the study, the subsequent chapters expand on the necessary and relevant details, further explaining the importance of the study’s completion.

Specifically, the second chapter focuses on providing an in-depth outline of the gay rights movement, the different definitions of family, and an expanded explanation of same-sex familial growth. This chapter also discusses the context surrounding the various voices within the analyzed texts.

The third chapter contains an expanded explanation of my method, including genre, apologia, and queer theory. It provides a description of what was looked for within the texts and a complete explanation of how this analysis was completed.

The fourth chapter reports the results of the study, taking an in-depth look at the voices of same-sex children to understand how their rhetorical defenses debunk the binaries of family and sexuality. This chapter is where the material within the texts, what the voices of the children are actually saying, is analyzed.

Finally, the last chapter concludes the thesis. Through tying the context, method and analysis together, this chapter provides insight into what connection the project has to other literature and helps propose new lines of exploration.
CHAPTER 2

CONTEXT

Edie Windsor, a female resident of New York, told a NPR reporter in 2013, "Marriage is this magic thing. [It] symbolizes commitment and love like nothing else in the world. And it's known all over the world. I mean, wherever you go, if you're married, that means something to people." In 2007, Edie Windsor married her life partner, Thea Spyer, in Toronto, Canada after nearly forty years of commitment to one another. The couple became engaged in 1967 but could not be married due to laws restricting same-sex marriages throughout the nation. It wasn’t until after Spyer was diagnosed with chronic progressive multiple sclerosis (MS) that the couple had the opportunity to marry. At the time of the wedding, Spyer’s MS had progressed to the point that she was quadriplegic and confined to a wheelchair, but the couple still flew to Canada to make their commitment legal. However, due to section three of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), their marriage was not federally recognized upon Spyer’s death in 2009.

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54 Ibid.
56 Though located in Canada, the wedding was recognized by the state of New York; United States v. Windsor, 133 S. Ct. 2675, 2682 (2013).
Section three of DOMA defined the terms marriage and spouse for U.S. law. It stated: “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,” and thus prevented the federal government from recognizing or providing benefits for marriages consisting of two people of the same sex. Windsor was therefore not eligible for estate tax exemptions granted to marriages consisting of husband and wife. Windsor told NPR, ”If Thea was Theo, I would not have had to pay.” Windsor owed the federal government $363,053 in taxes and the state of New York $275,528.

Windsor decided to fight against the payment of the estate taxes in 2009 when the Internal Revenue Service claimed she was not a surviving spouse on the basis of DOMA’s terms, and thus denied her a refund. She brought her case first to the Southern District of New York in June of 2012, challenging the legality of the third section of DOMA with regard to the equal protection clause, where they ruled in her favor. The case was then brought to the New York State Court of Appeals in October of 2012. The Supreme Court decided to hear her case two months later. The ruling in United States v. Windsor not only affected Windsor directly, but other same-sex couples and families across the nation by invalidating section three of DOMA. After the 2013 ruling, all same-sex marriages became federally recognized across the United States.

58 Nina Totenberg, “Meet the 83-Year-Old Taking on the U.S. Over Same-Sex Marriage.”
Though the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Windsor and returned her paid estate taxes, difficulties remain for same-sex couples and families like Windsor and Spyer, such as the difficulty of what it means to be a family with a homosexual couple at the head. It took Windsor and Spyer thirty years to marry after becoming engaged and the couple never raised children together.\textsuperscript{63} Windsor claimed she always wanted children but she and Spyer “believed that’s not fair to the kid,” due to societal views concerning homosexuality and children.\textsuperscript{64} This chapter will describe these societal concerns toward same-sex parented families and how those concerns have evolved over time. I will begin by providing a description of the laws surrounding the integration of same-sex marriage into society. I will then introduce the standard conception of the ideal American family and the alternative family forms that have developed from this standard. Following that, I will describe families headed by same-sex couples, highlighting it as an extreme ‘other’ of family forms. Finally, I will provide background for three sets of texts which highlight a distinct member of this family form, the children raised by them. This chapter will, therefore, establish an understanding of the relevance of this study by highlighting the current perception of same-sex parents and their families.

\textit{Equality Laws}

Since 1986, there have been many cases concerning same-sex relationships and their place within society. Four of these cases are of particular importance to the repeal of DOMA and the growth of rights for same-sex parents within American society. Those cases are \textit{Bowers v. Hardwick, Baehr v. Miike, Lawrence v. Texas} and \textit{Windsor v. United States}.\textsuperscript{63} \textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, 3.
States. The following section outlines these cases in detail to provide a foundational understanding of how the laws have changed.

1986 – Bowers v. Hardwick

Until 1962, sodomy was illegal across the nation and seen as a moral “crime against nature.”65 In 1986, the year of Bowers v. Hardwick, twenty-five states, including Georgia, had laws criminalizing sodomy. Bowers v. Hardwick concerns a homosexual man, Hardwick, who was indicted for committing sodomy in the state of Georgia. At the time of the ruling, Georgia law stated “a person commits the offense of sodomy when he performs or submits to any sexual act involving the sex organs of one person and the mouth or anus of another” and “a person convicted of the offense of sodomy shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than 20 years.”66 Hardwick was caught in his bedroom committing sodomy with a male partner when police were welcomed into his home by a guest.67 Though not prosecuted for the crime, Hardwick brought the case to Federal District Court in order to challenge the constitutionality of the statute.68 His argument was that since the act was committed consensually and within the privacy of his own home and bedroom it should not be criminalized by public law.69 He won an appeal with the U.S. Court of Appeals, who agreed that his fundamental right to privacy had been violated, and ruled that the Georgia law must be struck down.70

65 Stuart Taylor Jr., “Supreme Court Hears Case on Homosexual Rights.”
66 Georgia Code § 16-6-2; The Georgia law applied to both homosexual and heterosexual activity.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
The state of Georgia in turn brought the case to the Supreme Court who ultimately ruled that the Georgia statute was constitutionally sound. The Supreme Court found that sodomy, even when done in the privacy of one’s home, was not protected as a fundamental constitutional right.\footnote{Stuart Taylor Jr., “High Court, 5-4, Says States Have the Right to Outlaw Private Homosexual Acts.”} The opinion for \textit{Bowers v. Hardwick} states that “sodomy laws should not be invalidated on the asserted basis that majority belief that sodomy is immoral is an inadequate rationale to support the laws.”\footnote{Bowers v. Hardwick, 478 U.S. 186 (1986).} This meant the courts would not invalidate preset laws simply because, in hindsight, the laws are believed to be based on morality and not legality. This law therefore allowed that homosexuality is not a protected right, even when done in privacy, and paved the way for the illegalization of same-sex marriage in \textit{Baehr v. Miike}.\footnote{Wendy Somera, “Baehr v. Miike,” Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law, no. 20371 (1999): 227-230; Barbara Vobejda, “Same-Sex Marriage Becomes Political Issue: Gay-Rights Advocates Protest White House Backing of Federal Ban.”}

\textbf{1996 – \textit{Baehr v. Miike}}

\textit{Baehr v. Miike} was a Hawaiian state court case involving three same-sex couples who sued after being denied the right to marry.\footnote{Wendy Somera, “Baehr v. Miike,” 227.} The three couples applied for civil marriage licenses in December of 1990 and then sued the state of Hawaii in May of 1991 on the grounds that denying couples the right to marry based on sexual orientation was unconstitutional.\footnote{Ibid.} In October of 1991, when their case was dismissed at trial court, the couples appealed to the Supreme Court of Hawaii.\footnote{Ibid.} The state court found that there was no constitutional right to same-sex marriage under the right to privacy, as the couples were arguing, but justified supporting the discrimination claim due to Hawaii’s equal
protection clause. In response, Hawaii enacted a new statute in 1995, which defined marriage as happening solely between opposite-sex couples. This led to the review of the case presented by the three same-sex couples in 1996. The plaintiffs where ruled against; an amendment against same-sex marriage to then added to the Hawaii state constitution. The amendment read: “The legislature shall have the power to reserve marriage to opposite-sex couples.” Therefore, Hawaii became one of the first states to illegalize same-sex marriages and the motivation for the establishment of the Defense of Marriage Act.

2003 – Lawrence v. Texas

The 1986 Bowers v. Hardwick ruling was revisited and overturned in 2003 during Lawrence v. Texas. Similar to Hardwick’s situation, Lawrence v. Texas centers on two men, John Lawrence and Tyron Garner, found committing sodomy in a private dwelling. At the time of the ruling thirteen states still had sodomy laws, and four of these states punished sodomy only in a homosexual relationship; Texas was one of those four. Lawrence and Garner were arrested for the act, charged and convicted of the crime, and later challenged the statute under which they were convicted as a violation of the Texas Constitution and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The Equal Protection Clause guarantees that states cannot deny persons equal applications of laws;

76 Ibid.  
Lawrence and Garner challenged the sodomy law as only applying to homosexuals, and not heterosexuals, and therefore not providing equal protection.

The petitions at both the Harris County Criminal Court and The Court of Appeals were rejected. The convictions were supported based on the decision made during the *Bowers v. Hardwick* case. The federal court however, took notice and considered the petitions as violating the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment, while also questioning whether to overturn *Bowers v. Hardwick*. The court ultimately found both cases as unconstitutional. They overruled *Bowers v. Hardwick* and struck down the Texas sodomy law, declaring what *The New York Times* calls “constitutional liberty for gay men and lesbians.” This 2003 ruling can easily be viewed as the first major court ruling in favor of same-sex couples. The second, *United States v. Windsor*, was the case that struck down the Defense of Marriage Act.

2013 – *United States v. Windsor*

*Bowers v. Hardwick, Baehr v. Miike* and *Lawrence v. Texas* set the stage for *United States v. Windsor*, which concerned Edie Windsor’s challenge of the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act. Established in September 1996, the Defense of Marriage Act became public law under the 104th Congress and was the first federal bill concerning same-sex unions. Proposed in response to *Baehr v. Miike,*

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81 Justice Kennedy, “The Supreme Court.”
82 Ibid.
DOMA intended to “define and protect the institution of marriage” through amending the Dictionary Act, which “provides rules of construction for over 1,000 federal laws and the whole realm of federal regulations,” to include a legal definition of marriage and spouse.

DOMA consisted of three sections. The first section provided a short title for future citations of H.R. 3396, terming the law the “Defense of Marriage Act.” The second section dictated what powers remained with the states, allowing that each state could individually legalize same-sex marriage and that no other state would be required to recognize marriages legalized outside of their jurisdiction. The third and final section of DOMA provided legal definitions of “marriage” and “spouse.” The law stated that “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.” Due to these legal definitions, state sanctioned same-sex marriages were withheld from federal recognition.

In the case of United States v. Windsor, only section three of DOMA was challenged. With section three in place, married same-sex couples could not receive spousal health insurance, support for military spouses, or the right to file jointly on taxes, among other things. Section three also meant that Edie Windsor was responsible for the estate taxes.

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87 The Dictionary Act (U.S.C. §7, Title 1).
88 United States v. Windsor, 133 S. Ct. 2675, 2682 (2013)
91 Ibid.
92 Ibid.
93 “Frequently Asked Questions: Defense of Marriage Act,” GLAAD, July 2013,
http://www.glaad.org/marriage/doma#whatisdoma
left behind by her late spouse, as the exemption for surviving spouses did not apply to same-sex marriages. Windsor challenged DOMA as violating the Fifth Amendment, with regard to the principle of equal protection,\textsuperscript{94} and the United States Supreme Court ruled in her favor. This ruling effectively struck down section three of DOMA, redefining the definition of “marriage” and “spouse” to be more inclusive of same-sex couples.

Altering the federal definition of marriage and spouse had important implications for the gay rights movement. Legalizing same-sex marriage allowed couples to receive federal benefits and create stabilization for their families through these benefits. However, there are still many societal concerns aimed toward the morality and purpose of homosexual marriage and – as an extension of marriage – the families they may raise.

\textit{Standard Conception of the Nuclear Family}

To properly understand the societal concerns involved with homosexual marriage and parenting, it is important to first be aware of the standard conception of the ideal American family. The standard American family is known as the “nuclear family” and consists of one mother, one father, living on their own with two biologically related children.\textsuperscript{95} The nuclear family is credited back to an anthropologist by the name of George Murdock in 1949 who stated that the nuclear family “exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society.”\textsuperscript{96} The nuclear family is what society recognizes and accepts as the norm. This norm epitomizes the heterosexual family form.

\textsuperscript{94} United States v. Windsor, 133 S. Ct. 2675 (2013).
\textsuperscript{95} Timmermann, “What Ever Happened to the Nuclear Family? Impact of a Changing America on Financial Services.”
A 2010 article in *The New York Times* called the nuclear family “the universal, time-tested path to forming families and raising children.”

Despite being the standard, the nuclear family is not the only family form in America. Households are often compromised of broken versions of this model. A few examples are people living alone, single mothers or fathers, blended families and domestic partnerships. However, Murdock concludes that despite not being the singular family form, the nuclear family is “recognized to the exclusion of all others by our own society.” By using a binary definition, anything outside of this norm is seen as abnormal; with the nuclear family form as the norm, this dictates that all other forms are then abnormal.

Abnormal family forms constitute the majority of families today. Though remaining the model in American society, it was as early as the year 2000 that the United States Census showed that less than 25 percent of households actually consisted of the traditional nuclear family. Whereas society perceived the majority of families to be nuclear, this thought no longer held true. Daniel Potter says, “The term family is no longer reserved for households with children and two married biological parents but consists of an assortment of family structures, such as stepparents, single parents, and cohabiting parents.” Thus, the idea of what it means to be a family is changing. The ideal family model is no longer representative of a realistic “social landscape of America” and therefore is “challenged as a larger number and proportion of individuals

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98 Timmermann, “What Ever Happened to the Nuclear Family?”
100 Alex Kuczyński, “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner Now?”
101 Daniel Potter, “Same-Sex Parent Families and Children’s Academic Achievement,” 556.
create more fluid and flexible family structures.”¹⁰² That is, the general idea of what defines a family has begun to expand.

While Murdock established what the nuclear family is, he also defined the general term of “family,” as well. He defined family as including “adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults.”¹⁰³ This opens up the general concept of family as being inclusive of family forms different from the nuclear family. That is, under this definition, family is inclusive of variations outside of the nuclear family, but still not inclusive of same-sex households. “The most hotly contested of alternative family forms,”¹⁰⁴ the families headed by same-sex parents were frequently viewed as unstable and unnatural, and as existing in almost direct opposition to the believed universal standard of family and marriage. The key phrase in Murdock’s definition is “socially approved sexual relationship.” As homosexuality became more prominent within society, it also became apparent that the nature of a homosexual relationship, or the nature of their sexuality, was not socially approved. Over time, society has viewed the sexual relationship between gays and lesbians just as unnatural and abnormal as they consider the relationship itself. Therefore, this viewed abnormality exists at the root of the negative opinions on the stability of same-sex parents.

¹⁰² Ibid.
Homosexuality and Same-Sex Parenting

One of the early instances of gay rights advocacy within the United States happened in 1969 when the patrons of The Stonewall Inn Bar revolted against police harassment.\textsuperscript{105} Called the gay rights movement’s “foundational moment” by a 2013 \textit{New York Times} article,\textsuperscript{106} the raid resulted in 200 homosexuals responding to police discrimination. Lasting only 45 minutes, in which the patrons threw bricks, bottles and garbage before setting fire to the bar,\textsuperscript{107} the raid concluded with the arrest of 13 people and the injury of four police officers.\textsuperscript{108} Schneider and Roncolato note that “after this confrontation, the gay and lesbian rights movement marched into public view.”\textsuperscript{109} Quite literally, ten years later, thousands of homosexual people, along with their friends and family, marched up Fifth Avenue in New York in observation of 10\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the Stonewall Inn incident.\textsuperscript{110} To many, the raid marked the beginning of the gay rights movement.\textsuperscript{111} The Stonewall Inn’s location also served as Edie Windsor’s chosen destination after hearing the overruling of DOMA in 2013, where “hundreds of people” greeted her arrival by calling her name.\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Laurel Schneider and Carolyn Roncolato, “Queer Theologies,” \textit{Religion Compass} 6, no. 1 (2012): 3
\item Schneider and Roncolato, “Queer Theologies.”
\item Ariel Levy, “The Perfect Wife.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The Stonewall Inn raid initially sparked the gay rights movement, but the overturning of DOMA shined a light on the growth of same-sex parents. Though DOMA was enforced for seventeen years the bill did not stop the spread of legalizing same-sex marriage. Despite what DOMA withheld from married same-sex couples, thirteen states legalized same-sex marriage and over 43% of the population lived in a state that provided some form of protection for gay couples by the time Edie Windsor took a stand against DOMA. After the Supreme Court ruled in favor of Windsor, it became the first time in American history that same-sex marriages would be federally recognized, and the families within these marriages would be allowed the federal benefits previously withheld from them.

The majority opinion in the United States v. Windsor case, as written by Justice Kennedy, states that DOMA undermined the significance of same-sex marriages, and put them in “an unstable position of being a second-tier marriage” because of the withheld benefits. The majority opinion also claims that DOMA degraded same-sex couples and made same-sex parents unstable by humiliating the “tens of thousands of children now being raised by same-sex couples” through forcing them to question the “integrity and closeness of their own family and its concord with other families in their communities.” That is, DOMA destabilized same-sex parents by withholding these benefits, thus forcing families to question their value and place within society, especially in comparison to the heteronormative family.

115 Ibid.
The growth rate of same-sex parents developed alongside the number of states legalizing same-sex marriage. Many opponents of gay rights argued that same-sex unions have little or no right to marriage because they cannot conceive a child. A 2012 *New York Times* article claims advocates against same-sex marriage believed permitting same-sex couples to marry would redefine marriage from being a pro-child institution to being purely about “companionship and personal fulfillment,” suggesting that same-sex couples would not become parents.\(^{116}\) Despite this opinion, and with or without the label of marriage, same-sex couples actually were raising children. According to a U.S. Census report, the 2008 American Community Survey shows that 26.5% of female-female households contain children under the age of 18, while 13.9% of male-male households do.\(^{117}\) In total, there were 104,949 children being raised in same-sex households in 2008,\(^{118}\) compared to only 65,000 in 2006.\(^{119}\) This shows that in merely two years, the number of children in same-sex households grew by almost 40,000.

The growing number of children raised by homosexual couples suggests that an increasing amount of same-sex couples desire a family. GLAAD stated that as same-sex parents have become more visible in society and as these numbers have grown, “so too [did the] understanding of the challenges facing their families.”\(^{120}\) The main challenges faced by gay rights activists included establishing that same-sex parents did not harm the traditional or ideal institution of marriage.

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\(^{117}\) Kristy M. Krivickas and Daphne Lofquist, “Demographics of Same-Sex Couple Households with Children.”

\(^{118}\) Ibid.


the societal belief that without both a man and a woman as parents, children do not receive the family structure and support valued by society. Kimberly Richman says there is a perceived “instability and vulnerability […] present in families headed by one or more gay or lesbian parent.”

Though various studies on children of same-sex parents provided results that signal no significant difference between the children of heterosexual and homosexual parents, the argument still remains that same-sex couples cannot adequately raise children because they do not fall under the umbrella of the traditional societal family norm.

Legally, same-sex parents face challenges, as well. Despite the changing societal understanding of what constitutes a ‘family,’ there has been few legal issues to support reshaping any legal definition. Richman says, “The archetypal framework of “family” assumed by law—[consists] of one parent of each gender, who are married, and whose children are biologically related to them.” That is to say, the representative legal standard of a family epitomizes the heterosexual family norm. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute states:

Although the public largely believes that a family is something more than a legal relationship and that caring for one another transcends legal boundaries, the vast majority of the policies that govern people’s lives

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define family as a legal unit comprised of a married man and woman with
their own biological or adopted children.\textsuperscript{124}

Legally, a ‘family’ remains categorized under the traditional archetype of the nuclear
family: one man and one woman as parents.

This legal belief that a family should fit the archetypal standard results in a denial
of rights to same-sex families. In 2006, Rosato reviewed cases of parental presumption,
where lesbian and gay parents were denied rights to their children because of their sexual
orientation and lack of legal parentage over children they raised.\textsuperscript{125} Rosato says,
“Children of same-sex couples lack this security [of parental presumption] and
consequently are left out in the cold.”\textsuperscript{126} In one particular case, Rosato’s study showed
that the Circuit Court in Hawaii ruled in favor of same sex parental presumption with the
statement that “recognizing the couples’ relationships through marriage actually could
improve children’s welfare because same-sex couples would be entitled to certain
benefits and protections.”\textsuperscript{127} The author suggested that by allowing same-sex couples the
right to marry, courts extend benefits and protection to the children of these families.

However, this suggestion did not extend to actual court procedures. Courts
generally operate on the “guiding principle”\textsuperscript{128} of whatever is in the best interest of the

\textsuperscript{124} S. Cahill, M. Ellen and S. Tobias, “Family Policy: Issues Affecting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual
www.ngltf.org
\textsuperscript{125} Jennifer L. Rosato, “Children of Same-Sex Parents Deserve the Security Blanket.”
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid, 79.
child.\textsuperscript{129} Yet, due to the social stigma surrounding same-sex marriage, same-sex parents were often not included in the ‘best interest’ during cases of same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption.\textsuperscript{130} Nonetheless, studies have repeatedly shown that children raised by homosexual parents are developmentally equal to children raised within families that fit the more stereotypical norm.\textsuperscript{131} Various studies suggest “it is processes within the family … that contribute to higher levels of wellbeing among children, irrespective of parents’ sexual orientation.”\textsuperscript{132} It is not the sexual orientation of a parent that decides the well-being of a child, but the general concept of what a family does. Whereas the legal definition suggests it is nothing more than the constitution of the members within a family that classifies them as a family and verifies their development, these aforementioned studies suggest it is the actual happenings within the family that defines them.

The controversy surrounding the definition of what makes a family is not just important to same-sex couples, but to the children that couple may raise. Due to the societal view of their parents, children of same-sex couples live with a stigma.\textsuperscript{133} This stigma develops as insecurity not only in their parents’ sexual orientation, but the belief of how that orientation devalues them as a family.\textsuperscript{134} Marjorie Welsh conducted a study in 2011 on the opinions of adolescents raised by same-sex parents in order to “begin a conversation about the ways in which they individually and collectively understand and

\begin{itemize}
\item Amanda K. Baumle and D’Lane R. Compton, “Legislating the Family,” 82.
\item Power and Colleagues, “Understanding Resilience In Same-Sex Parented Families.”
\item Ibid.
\item Marjorie G. Welsh, “Growing up in a Same-Sex Parented Family,” 50; United States v. Windsor, 133 S. Ct. 2675, 2694 (2013).
\item Marjorie G. Welsh, “Growing up in a Same-Sex Parented Family,” 50.
\end{itemize}
assign meaning to their experience of having same-sex parents.” 135 That is, the author aimed to give the children of same-sex parents a place within the conversation on whether same-sex parents could raise healthy children.

Five primary themes arose from the testimonies of the children in Welsh’s study, the first of which was the concept of family. The author says, “Each individual who participated in this study put forth an effort to define their family in some way,” 136 with their “concepts of what it means to be a family transcending the stereotypical limitations of the traditional model of family.” 137 Furthermore, Welsh states that “these participants used language that broadly reflects bonds of love, support, connection, and tolerance to describe concepts of family.” 138 The participants in the study acknowledged the ‘dominant cultural paradigms’ but still constructed an idea of what family means within their own families that was equivalent to the idea constructed within the heteronormative family form. This study shows that children of same-sex parents are aware of the stigma society places on their families, and that these children are speaking out about the definition of a family.

This question of what defines a family is not only a theme within Welsh’s 2011 study, and throughout the arguments for and against same-sex marriage, but is a theme within the speeches and testimonies that will be used within this study. With the overturning of DOMA, the rhetoric used by the children of same-sex parents is even more relevant than ever. Inarguably, the children raised by same-sex couples have a

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135 Ibid.
136 Ibid, 69.
137 Ibid, 56.
138 Marjorie G. Welsh, “Growing up in a Same-Sex Parented Family,” 56.
unique perspective and understanding of how their families operate and what values are instilled in the children raised within them. As the rate of children being raised by homosexual parents is growing, the understanding of how these children communicate and how that communication works as a defense of their parents is important because they provide an exclusive look at a central societal issue of this era. The idea of what comprises a typical family is changing, and exploring the rhetoric of children in an alternative family form, like those with same-sex parents, helps to understand how those changes are perceived by those raised within that family form.

Texts

The following section presents background on three texts that prominently feature the rhetoric of children from same-sex parents. All of these texts were released into the public forum and consist of children defending their parents and their upbringing. I have chosen to limit my study to only three texts. These three are prominently featured in online searches of defenses from children raised by same-sex parents. They also all share the characteristic of being concerned with the legalization of same-sex marriage. The first text is a speech presented by Zachariah Wahls in 2009 at an Iowa House of Representatives meeting.

“What Makes a Family” by Zachariah Wahls

On April 3, 2009, the state of Iowa ruled it was unconstitutional to have “a state law limiting marriage to a man and a woman.” 139 Many Iowans stood in opposition to

the ruling, and just under two years later, the Iowa House of Representatives met to vote on that amendment. The amendment read: “This joint resolution proposes an amendment to the Constitution of the State of Iowa specifying that marriage between one man and one woman shall be the only legal union valid or recognized in this state.” Approval of the amendment meant Iowa no longer recognized same-sex marriages.

On the day they voted on the amendment, 116 Iowans on both sides of the issue signed up to speak at the hearing. Zachariah Wahls, a 19 year-old son of two same-sex parents, was among them. Born in 1991, Zach Wahls was conceived through donor insemination by then-single mother, Terry Wahls. He has one sister, three years younger than him, also conceived from insemination from the same donor. The shared donor, as he notes in his speech, made Zach and his sister full-siblings. Zach grew up as an Eagle Scout of America, and scored in the 99th percentile on the ACT. In his book, Wahls lists many achievements, including being a small-business owner and a state championship-winning debater. He went to the University of Iowa to study environmental engineering, but decided to put his studies on hold after presenting his testimony at the Iowa House of Representatives hearing in order to play a larger role as an advocate for marriage equality.

140 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
146 Ibid.
In 1995, Zach’s biological mother met Jackie Reger, who became Zach’s second mother. Jackie and Terry held a commitment ceremony in 1996, and were legally married in 2009. Zach’s official website tells that Jackie “immediately” became involved in Zach’s life. Throughout the years she was also actively involved in his time as Cub, Boy, and Eagle Scout. Terry and Jackie made an effort to instill strong values in Zach and his sister. Zach’s book, *My Two Moms*, tells that the family always had conversational sit-down dinners. He says,

It was around the dinner table that they introduced us to the book *Teaching Your Children Values* by Linda and Richard Eyre … Every night since I was a young child, we’d share examples of that month’s values … these values sank in. My moms equipped me with a strong sense of right and wrong and taught me that the world is rarely black and white.

Wahls’ book continued to tell of the values Terry and Jackie wanted to instill in their children, as well as the various conversations the family had. Wahls stated that the dinner table was where he first announced that he was going to speak at the Iowa House of Representatives.

Not even twenty-four hours after Wahls spoke in front of the house, articles across the Internet declared that his speech “went viral across the Internet and had nearly half a million hits on YouTube today.” While impossible to deduce the reasoning for

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149 Zach Wahls, *My Two Moms*, 16.
150 Ibid.
why so many viewers watched Wahls’ speech virally, it is definitely curious what message Wahls’ sent that attracted so many viewers.

*Voices of our Children, Amicus Brief*

The second text is a Supreme Court amicus brief submitted in March 2013 by the Family Equality Council (in part with GLSEN, COLAGE, Our Family Coalition, the Center on Children and Families and the Child Rights Project). The Family Equality Council identified this brief as acting on behalf of Edie Windsor. The Family Equality Council’s website talks about many briefs made in support and against same-sex marriage rights, but calls their brief “unique in that it does not focus on the law – but on the all too often unheard voices of the children who are at the center of this debate on marriage.”

This brief presents the words and testimony of 15 children of same-sex parents, including Zach Wahls, who told of their experiences being raised by lesbian or gay couples. Eight of these children come from female-female households, six of them come from male-male households and 2 were not specified by the brief. The children documented in the brief range from ages 10 to 24. Their testimonies were gathered from official comments made to the Family Equity Council and Our Family Coalition, statements voiced at legal hearings, and published opinion or news stories.

The Family Equity Council website stated that their brief was presented in order make the “compelling point” that denying same-sex couples the same rights as

heterosexual couples “does absolutely nothing but single out same-sex couples and their children as ‘different’ and ‘inferior.’”\textsuperscript{154} This text presents many different statements from same-sex children, which defend their families against societal concerns and consistently express that their families are no different from families within in the norm.

\textit{Letter by Daniel Martinez-Leffew}

In 2013, Daniel Martinez-Leffew, age 12, wrote a letter to Supreme Court Chief Justice, John Roberts. He and one of his two fathers then uploaded a video of him reading the letter he wrote on YouTube\textsuperscript{155} which urges Chief Justice Roberts to end the ban on gay marriage in California\textsuperscript{156} and to strike down DOMA. He and his sister were adopted at five and 12 months, respectively.\textsuperscript{157} Daniel has a genetic disorder called Goldenhar Syndrome, which affects the development of the eye, ear and spine.\textsuperscript{158} Daniel’s disorder, in particular, affects the entire left side of his body. During his time in foster care, Daniel said he was often told he was unadoptable because of the disease.\textsuperscript{159} He adds, “Lucky for me, that’s when my two dads came along.”\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{154} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{155} Daniel Martinez-Leffew, \textit{Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts}, YouTube video, 4:11, March 17th, 2013, \url{http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_bAiTwJAnc&list=UUf_RXYiC9Ls6Lw4Gfzbuwfg&index=1}
\textsuperscript{156} The California ban on same-sex marriage was known as Proposition 8.
\textsuperscript{157} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{158} Genetic and Rare Diseases Information Center, “Goldenhar Disease,” \textit{GARD}, Accessed November 4, 2013, \url{http://rarediseases.info.nih.gov/gard/6540/goldenhar-disease/resources/1#General Information}
\textsuperscript{159} Daniel Martinez-Leffew, \textit{Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts}.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
Daniel’s fathers, Bryan and Jay, run a YouTube channel in their spare time called “Gay Family Values.” They describe the channel as hoping “to educate, entertain […] and give food for thought about what it means to be gay in America.” This is the outlet through which Daniel’s letter was heard within the public forum. Gay Family Values describes the Martinez-Leffew family as “just an average everyday family who happens to also be a same-sex family.” Daniel’s four minute and eleven second YouTube reading of his letter to Justice Roberts discussed the direct effect the California law and DOMA had on his family, and families like his.

Conclusion

Since 1969, when patrons of the Stonewall Inn Bar fought back against the police raid, there has been much advancement and movement toward equal rights for homosexuals, both in laws and within society. This growth is evident through the recent decision to overturn DOMA and through the growth rate of same-sex parents. The majority of families in society no longer consist solely of the nuclear standard, but are instead largely constituted by families existing outside the perceived norm. However, as these alternative forms increase, so too does the question of how the families raised within them develop.

Families raised by homosexual couples in particular encounter the criticism and concern that it is unstable and unnatural, as well as the question of what effect, if any, same-sex couples have on children they raise. The idea of instability and abnormality

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162 Ibid.
within alternative family forms develops from the societal belief in various standard and idealized definitions, many of which have been questioned throughout the gay rights movement and within the laws discussed in this chapter. Terms such as “marriage,” “family,” and “spouse” have all been disputed and reevaluated, yet still remain exclusive of same-sex parents. Defining family in a way that is not only accepted by society, but is also inclusive of a same-sex parented family form – as well as other alternative family forms – is a huge challenge faced by those fighting for equal rights.

Therefore, those fighting for gay rights attempt to counteract concerns about same-sex parents by redefining these definitions and demystifying this family form. Of those advocating for the rights and defending stabilization within these families are the homosexual couples themselves and, more distinctively, their children. Children raised within these homes have a unique experience, as well as the ability to understand same-sex parents in ways others cannot. As the number of children from homosexual parents grows, it becomes more important to understand what rhetorical tools they use to contest concerns about their families and what ways they communicate in opposition to such negative views.

The texts presented in this chapter provide a representative anecdote of the rhetoric of these children, acting in defense of their parents. In the following chapter, I will lay out a way of analyzing these defenses, or apologia, in order to understand what rhetorical tools are used and how these tools work to combat the sole acceptance and reduce the idealization of the heteronormative family form by redefining the definition of family.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

In the 2013 society, with the majority of Americans approving of same-sex marriage for the first time ever, many different defenses, and defenders, of same-sex couples arose. One of them was Ellen DeGeneres, the widely known lesbian media persona. Seventeen years prior to 2013, she was not the openly homosexual, comedic talk-show host she was then known for being. Still on television and actively attempting comedy, she had yet to come out about her sexual orientation. In 1997, DeGeneres starred on the ABC comedy titled, Ellen. The show ran from 1994 through 1998, ending soon after DeGeneres revealed she was a lesbian, both as an actress and as a fictional character within the sitcom. The nonfictional Ellen came out in an article in Time magazine, marking “the first time she [had] discussed her sexual identity with the media.” Before doing so, much debate happened between DeGeneres and the executives of her show as to whether the fictional character, Ellen Moran, should come out as homosexual. DeGeneres believed that if she was going to have her character come out, it would be necessary for herself to do so as well. DeGeneres told Time magazine,


\[165^{165}\] Ibid.
"I never wanted to be the lesbian actress. I never wanted to be the spokesperson for the gay community. Ever. I did it for my own truth."

Despite not wanting to become a spokesperson for the gay community, she eventually became just that. Once her character came out on “The Puppy Episode” of *Ellen*, the show was hit with controversy. Advertisers such as JCPenny and Chrysler refrained from purchasing airtime during the show. The late Reverend Jerry Falwell, founder and former head of the Moral Majority, was quoted as calling her “Ellen Degenerate.” *The Hollywood Reporter* tells that DeGeneres was blacklisted in Hollywood, and that some of the guest stars of “The Puppy Episode” were affected, as well. Oprah Winfrey, who played the therapist to whom the fictional Ellen came out, told *The Hollywood Reporter* that she received hateful phone calls and letters, and was called offensive racial slurs as a result of her appearance in the episode. In October of 1997, after the episode aired, DeGeneres threatened to walk when the *ABC* network decided to add an on-screen advisory warning “declaring that the show has adult content

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168 According to the *New York Times*, the Moral Majority was an organization that combined religious factions that agree on issues of “pro-life, pro-traditional family, pro-moral and pro-American.” It was meant to “unite conservatives of different faiths and backgrounds.” Peter Applebome, “Jerry Falwell, Moral Majority Founder, Dies at 73,” *New York Times*, May 16, 2007, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/16/obituaries/16falwell.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
169 “Ellen DeGeneres Tells *Time* She’s a Lesbian,” *CNN*.
171 Lacey Rose, “Oprah Winfrey: I was Called the N-Word After Ellen Came Out.”
and warning parents to use discretion in allowing children to view it.”¹⁷² DeGeneres referred to the advisory as “blatant discrimination,” claiming the network was inadvertently telling children that there was something wrong with being gay.¹⁷³ The television show ultimately did not last much longer; however, DeGeneres’s career continued.

After another failing follow-up sitcom, The Ellen Show, DeGeneres began her daytime talk show, The Ellen DeGeneres Show, for which she is now known. It is through this talk show that DeGeneres became influential in the representation and defense of the LGBT community. By “standing up for her own truth,” she ultimately began standing up for the truth of others. When California legalized same-sex marriages in 2008, DeGeneres married Portia de Rossi.¹⁷⁴ Months later, when California passed Proposition 8, which declared that only marriages between one man and one woman would be valid or recognized in California,¹⁷⁵ thus withholding benefits from DeGeneres and de Rossi, DeGeneres spoke out against the ruling on her blog and talk show.¹⁷⁶ She has since continued to speak out for gay rights, becoming one of many voices attempting to defend same-sex marriages.

In this chapter, I provide a method of analyzing another defense of same-sex couples and the families they produce: the rhetoric of the children brought up by them.

¹⁷³ Ibid.
¹⁷⁵ Cal. Const. art. I, § 7.5; more commonly referred to as Proposition 8.
This involves understanding how these texts utilize the strategies within the genre of apologia, as analyzed through the lens of queer theory. In order to best explain this methodology, I first present a brief overview of genre as a type of rhetorical criticism before detailing the specific type of genre studied, apologia. While outlining apologia, I breakdown of the various types of defense strategies and then explain how these strategies have been analyzed and identified in prior studies. Finally, I explain queer theory and show how framing the study through such a lens extends the analysis to understand how the texts debunk standardized conceptions of marriage and redefine the idea of family.

Genre

The texts used in this study all fall under the same category of discourse – a statement given by a child of same-sex marriage in the public forum in defense of same-sex marriage – which allows them to be grouped as a genre. Campbell and Jamieson state, “genres are groups of discourses which share substantive, stylistic, and situational characteristics.”

By nature, these texts share the characteristics of being presented by children of same-sex parents, who oppose withholding rights to same-sex couples. By analyzing the texts as a genre, one can recognize similarities or reoccurring patterns that may exist between them, which then allows for a clearer understanding of the genre as a whole. Therefore, in order to better understand how discourse presented by children of same-sex parents uniquely defends same-sex marriage, a generic criticism was conducted.


178 Ibid, 447.
Genre criticism is a method of analyzing rhetoric. In 1965, Edwin Black suggested the concept of looking at discourse through a generic frame of reference. Before Black’s proposition, traditional forms of rhetorical study focused almost solely on understanding the meaning of a single rhetorical act in a given moment to an audience. As an alternative method of studying rhetoric, a genre criticism allows a critic to “trace traditions or recognize affinities and recurrent forms,” and to understand the relationship that exists between various rhetorical acts. Using Black’s breakdown of what a generic text presumes about rhetorical acts, Campbell and Jamieson summarize that generic discourse is “characterized by certain strategies that seemed more likely to occur in certain kinds of situations.” That is, a genre is formed from similar situations producing responses that use similar rhetorical forms.

Studying texts with similar situations and forms allows the critic to analyze a body of work, a genre, instead of an individual text. Campbell and Jamieson tell that “a ‘genre’ is a classification based on the fusion and interrelation of elements in such a way that a unique kind of rhetorical act is created.” By studying a group of texts as a unit, instead of as individual pieces, it’s possible to identify characteristics that apply to an even larger body or category of text. For example, Stephen E. Lucas looked at how George Washington’s 1789 inaugural address fits within the genre of inaugural addresses in order to better understand how the components of the inaugural address genre came to

180 Campbell and Jamieson, “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism,” 447.
182 Campbell and Jamieson, “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism,” 448.
183 Campbell and Jamieson, “Form and Genre in Rhetorical Criticism,” 457.
be. As well, Joseph M. Valenzano III analyzed how George W. Bush’s first inaugural speech fit into the presidential genre of inaugural speeches and how these generic elements of an inaugural then outline the principles that guided President Bush’s presidency. Thus, by studying the speech within the genre of inaugural speeches, Lucas and Valenzano’s studies added understanding about the larger practice of presidential inaugural addresses.

There are various methods used to complete a generic criticism. Valenzano’s and Lucas’ completed their studies by looking at how one discourse fit within a larger genre, analyzing how the elements of the speech fit within the established components of inaugural addresses. This is known as a deductive method of study, a formula for completing a generic criticism, which involves measuring “the text against a pre-existing model.” Using a deductive method allows one to study new text(s) in search of qualities which already exist in a comparative rhetorical act, in order to label the new text(s) as a part of the pre-existing genre. I used a deductive method of study in order to show how the rhetoric of children raised by same-sex parents enacts the genre of apologia.

186 Joseph M. Valenzano III, “The Presidency that Almost Wasn’t.”
187 Ibid, 449.
Apologia

Apologia is a genre that includes speeches of self-defense.\textsuperscript{188} Ware and Linkugel describe the situation that calls for apologia as “an attack upon a person’s character, upon his worth as a human being” and says that this situation demands a direct response.\textsuperscript{189} In these cases, Ware and Linkugel continue, it is a “questioning of a man’s moral nature, motives or reputation” and as the charge is personal in nature, it is “most easily satisfied only by the most personal of responses by the accused.”\textsuperscript{190} This personal response is the apologia, or the defense of their morals or character against an accusation in an effort to restore their image in the public eye. In order to better understand these defenses, I have outlined the five categories, and their sub-categories, of apologetic strategies and then provided examples of previous studies in which these strategies have been identified and analyzed.

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\textsuperscript{188} B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves: On the Generic Criticism of Apologia,” in \textit{Readings in Rhetorical Criticism} (State College, PA: Strata Publishing, 2010), 462.
\textsuperscript{189} B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves,” 462.
\textsuperscript{190} Ibid, 462-463.
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Blaney and Benoit present five strategies of apologia: denial, evading responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of an event, corrective action and mortification.\(^{191}\) The first category, denial, consists of two sub-strategies: simple denial and shifting the blame. Ware and Linkugel label apologetic denial as a reformative strategy, meaning the defense does not attempt to alter the audience’s meaning of ideas, but instead to reform the audience’s perception of the rhetor’s offensiveness through denying any involvement with the action.\(^{192}\) A ‘simple denial’ strategy consists of a straightforward refutation against involvement in wrongdoing, whereas when using ‘shifting the blame,’ the rhetor “attempts to lay responsibility for the transgression on another party.”\(^{193}\) Blaney and Benoit provide the example of one saying “I did not do it,” in comparison to saying “My accountant did it.”\(^{194}\) The latter strategy denies overall participation; the former denies participation by stating instead that others are to blame.

The second strategy of apologia is ‘evading responsibility,’ which includes the sub-strategies of provocation, defeasibility, accident, and good intentions. All the strategies within evading responsibility attempt to reduce the amount to which the defendant can be blamed for their actions, or to lessen the rhetor’s responsibility. A provocation uses the defense that the rhetor was “goaded … into the offensive


\(^{192}\) Ibid, 464.


\(^{194}\) Ibid.
behavior,”¹⁹⁵ or provoked into involvement. In their work with P. M. Pier on the political campaigns in 1996, Blaney and Benoit state that the rhetor attempts to lessen the offensiveness of their actions by claiming it was only in response to another offensive action, which can help lessen the responsibility from the speaker.¹⁹⁶ An example would be to say “I was verbally attacked first,” to justify the offensive action.

The second sub-strategy of evading responsibility is defeasibility, which is a defense where the accused was without the information necessary to fully understand the offensiveness of their actions, or the rhetor claims their actions were ill-informed. The speaker alleges they should hold less responsibility for their actions due to not having the information needed to make a better choice. For example, in Kevin Stein’s 2010 study on the effectiveness of Mel Gibson’s apologies toward the Jewish community, he showed that Gibson used defeasibility apologia by identifying himself as both out of control and inebriated, making the defense that he was not within the right mind – or without the ability to reason through information effectively – to properly consider his choice.¹⁹⁷

The third sub-strategy of evading responsibility, the accident strategy, asserts that the transgression happened as a typical flaw or error, or that the misdeed was an unintended mistake. This strategy hopes to convince the audience that “the act in question happened accidentally”¹⁹⁸ in order to make it so that the rhetor is held less accountable, thus reducing the damage. For example, Benoit, Blaney and Pier explain that when Sears was accused of overcharging Californian customers for auto repairs in 1992, they claimed

¹⁹⁸ William L. Benoit, Joseph R. Blaney, and P. M. Pier, Campaign ’96, 41.
it happened “inadvertently” in their apology, to show the situation was out of their control.\textsuperscript{199} Therefore, they claimed it was simply a mistake and had been out of their hands. Lastly, the accused may try to evade responsibility by claiming that they had good intentions when completing the offensive act. Claiming good intentions plays on the idea that those who do wrong when attempting good are not as accountable as those \textit{intending} to cause harm.\textsuperscript{200} To illustrate this, looking again at when Sears overcharged customers, the company disputed the accusation by claiming they would never intentionally cause harm to loyal Sears’ customers.\textsuperscript{201} Both the accident strategy and the claiming good intentions strategy play on the intent of the accused.

The third category presented by Blaney and Benoit is ‘reducing the offensiveness of an event,’\textsuperscript{202} which attempts to lessen the vulgarity of an action by maintaining a rhetor’s favorable image. This category includes six sub-strategies, each of which attempts to change the negative view of the defended action in a different way. The first three strategies – bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence – were identified by Ware and Linkugel and later expanded upon by Blaney and Benoit.\textsuperscript{203} Bolstering apologia involves a speaker trying “to identify himself with something viewed favorably by the audience.”\textsuperscript{204} Ware and Linkugel identify bolstering, as they did with denial, as a reformative strategy. Therefore, a bolstering defense will attempt to alter the audience’s opinion by reminding them of the “many good qualities” attributed to the rhetor in order

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{203} B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves;” Joseph R. Blaney and William L. Benoit, \textit{The Clinton Scandals}.
\textsuperscript{204} B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves,” 465.
to appear less offensive. The speaker reforms the perception of their image by representing their good qualities over their bad. An example of this can be seen in Nancy Johnson’s 2011 study, which analyzed the apologia used by Christian Bale after he aimed a four-minute tirade at his director of photography. She found that Bale bolstered his image by maintaining a good nature, inviting empathy and employing modesty. Completing his statement with this method of apologia allowed Bale to reshape, or reform the way the public saw his attack by presenting himself as good willed, which reduced the negative image his actions placed upon him.

On the other hand, Ware and Linkugel define differentiation and transcendence as transformative, meaning these strategies attempt to change the audience perception of ideals or meanings into something novel. Differentiation apologia uses strategies which strive to “separate some fact, sentiment, object, or relationship from some larger context within which the audience presently views that attribute.” A differentiation defense aims to restructure the audience’s conceptual meaning of the action to make their offense appear more acceptable, thus transforming the audience’s view. For example, in Stein’s study on Mel Gibson’s defense, he found that using differentiation allowed Gibson to separate himself from anti-Semitic beliefs despite using language offensive to the Jewish community. Therefore, he transformed his actions by stating that his hurtful language did not mean he was anti-Semitic.

207 Ibid.
208 B. L. Ware and Wil A. Linkugel, “They Spoke in Defense of Themselves,” 466.
209 Kevin A. Stein, “Jewish Antapologia in Response to Mel Gibson’s Multiple Attempts at Absolution.”
Transcendent apologia attempts to transform audience meaning by “cognitively join[ing] some fact, sentiment, object or relationship with some larger context within which the audience does not presently view that attribute.”210 That is, a speaker attempts to change an audience’s view of a larger idea or concept to become more accepting of the defended action. There is a search for a “change in cognitive identification” through “psychologically [moving] the audience away from the particulars of the charge at hand in a direction toward some more abstract, general view.”211 Therefore, the transcendence happens by moving the ideas of the audience to become broader, and consequently more inclusive. An example of this is found in Jason Edward’s 2008 study examining Kofi Annan’s attempt to repair the image of the United Nations in Rwanda after the genocide that occurred there. Edwards found that Annan used transcendence apologia within the second half of his speech by explaining how the genocide fit within the larger context of rebuilding the future of Rwanda.212 He tried to apply the situation to this broader perspective to create a positive image, thus attempting to transcend the audience’s negative view of the genocide by showing them lessons the world can take from the act.

The other sub-strategies under the category of ‘reducing the offensiveness of an event’ are minimization, attacking the accuser and compensation. Minimization is used by a rhetor to make the transgression seem less important or distasteful than it first appeared.213 If the speaker can reduce the importance of the indiscretion, the audience’s negative view of that action will decrease. Blaney and Benoit provide the example of a

210 Ibid, 467.
211 Ibid.
politician defending a vote for increased budget deficit by saying, “It’s only another twenty million dollars. That’s a tiny portion of the budget.” 214 The defendant would therefore be attempting to minimize the offensiveness of the accused wrongdoing by making it appear less significant in comparison to the overall budget amount. The next sub-strategy, attacking the accuser, attempts to shift the focus from the rhetor’s wrongdoing to the source of the accusation. 215 Here, the rhetor will attack the accuser in hope of lessening their credibility and therefore reducing the negative view of their accused actions. For example, the rhetor may attack the character of the person accusing them in order to shift the focus or make the source seem less valid. Lastly, compensation apologia attempts to reduce the offensiveness of an action by offering some form of repayment for their accused action. 216 The rhetor will offer, in services or monetary goods, 217 to make some gesture or action that will make up for what they have done wrong. Benoit, Blaney and Pier provided the example of a Missouri movie theatre that apologized to a group of disabled people for denying them admission by offering them free passes. 218

The final two strategies are ‘corrective action’ and ‘mortification.’ Corrective action apologia involves a promise from the rhetor to change their current ways to avoid a reoccurrence of their offense. 219 It is a forward-thinking defense, showing that the rhetor will strive to change and avoid the same mistakes, or to actually correct the problem if it is fixable. An example of this can be seen in Stein’s analysis of Mel

214 Ibid.
216 Ibid.
217 William L. Benoit, Joseph R. Blaney, and P. M. Pier, Campaign ‘96.
218 Ibid, 43.
Gibson’s defense. Stein identified Gibson as using corrective action apologia by “claiming [Gibson] would see the input of the Jewish leaders in how to perpetuate a process of healing.” That is, he would seek a way to correct his own offenses in the community’s eyes by beginning a healing process. The last strategy of defense is mortification, where the speaker admits wrong-doing and then seeks forgiveness for what they have done. While similar to the compensation sub-strategy, mortification does not offer payment to atone for their accused offense, but shows that they accept the responsibility of their actions. Blaney, Benoit and Pier point out that the audience needs to accept that the apology is sincere and believe the action is pardonable for mortification to restore the rhetor’s image. In Johnson’s study on Christian Bale, she found that he used mortification in a particularly effective way. Bale took ownership of and responsibility for his actions, by when so far as to call them “inexcusable.” By refusing to accept an opportunity for forgiveness, he was actually granted forgiveness by claiming his actions were inexcusable and thus making the audience view him in a more positive light.

As shown through the examples in this section, many scholars have employed the study of apologia in order to understand what strategies create a strong defense. In the various presented studies, each author completed a close textual content analysis of the rhetoric in question. They identified defensive statements, or rhetoric attempting to restore an image, and then distinguished the components of the statements from one another to establish the various types of apologia used. In this study, I duplicated their

221 William L. Benoit, Joseph R. Blaney, and P. M. Pier, Campaign ’96, 43.
methodology by completing a close textual reading of the rhetoric of same-sex children to determine what strategies the children used, and how these strategies defended against the societal claims against same-sex parents.

Apologia of Same-Sex Parents

The defenses of same-sex parents, as presented by their children, were analyzed within this study. The audience, both intended and unintended, had some preconceived notion about what it means to be a family or who can enter into marriage. In their defenses, children of same-sex marriage spoke to overcome heteronormative views by reducing the negative perception of homosexual parents. In this study, I attempted to understand how the children of same-sex parents, speaking in favor of same-sex marriage, defended their parentage. I studied how these texts employed the genre and strategies of apologia, and how their apologia worked to create a more inclusive conception of the family. To do this, the discourses were studied within the frame of queer theory. Queer theory views texts to critically analyze existing binary thinking. Through the lens of queer theory, a critic looks at what rhetorical tools a text uses to destabilize identity categories. Therefore, the apologia is analyzed to understand how the children of same-sex couples reframed the binaries of sexuality.

Queer Theory

Queer theory looks at how gender is defined or identified based on the sexuality of humans, and can exist in a multitude of categories, within a variety of rhetorical forms. In “Normalization of Queer Theory” David Halperin tells that,

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223 Schneider and Roncolato, “Queer Theologies,” 2.
Queer theory has effectively re-opened the question of the relations between sexuality and gender, both as analytic categories and as lived experiences; … it has pursued the task … of detaching the critique of gender and sexuality from narrowly conceived notions of lesbian and gay identity; it has supported non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality, encouraging both theoretical and political resistance to normalization…

Halperin concludes that queer theory has given gender and sexuality critics a new way of analyzing literature that focuses on ignoring the normalization of heterosexual identity. He argues that queer theory re-examines how gender and sexuality are connected, by looking at this connection through a lens that overlooks the norms of society to reevaluate what is described as the ‘other,’ or any idea or concept that exists outside of the societal norm.

Queer theory is about deconstructing heteronormativity to alleviate the perception that homosexuality is this so-called ‘other’ in society. Heteronormativity is the view that heterosexuality is the normal, natural, state for society. More so, heteronormativity provides a basis through which one can understand sexuality and gender within a society. This viewpoint allows that heterosexuality is the normal and natural state, and as an extension, allows the perception that homosexuality is then abnormal. In other words, “as long as sexual orientation is a term applied primarily to those who are not deemed sexually ‘straight,’ then heterosexuality will continue to serve as a taken-for-

granted norm against which other forms of human sexuality are defined, measured, and judged.” Accordingly, in order to remove the idea of homosexuality as an ‘other,’ the norm must be removed. This is the goal of queer theory.

Queer theory attempts to remove the societal norms through the idea of queering. At its most basic, queer theory is easily defined as a “resistance against heterosexual knowing.” Gloria Filax presented the idea of ‘queering’ as the idea of exposing “how identity categories, in particular sexuality, are produced in relation to a fabricated norm” and may be done by anyone who rejects the “straight-gay binary.” Therefore, anyone who ignores the binaries or resists the notion of heterosexuality as the norm is then ‘queering’ through their chosen discourse. Filax continues to say that “to queer is to notice, call into question, and refuse heterosexuality as the natural foundation of social institutions.” To ‘queer’ is to deny the idea of heteronormativity. Queering is not about simply pointing out the inequalities between homosexual and heterosexual couples, but about showing that these inequalities arise from the belief that heterosexuality is the natural or normal state for society, and that homosexuality lies ‘opposite’ of this normality. Again, in order for heteronormativity to exist, homosexuality must remain the abnormal other. To eliminate the binary, homosexuality must be redefined and removed from the state of the abnormal. To do so would then remove heterosexuality as the norm, thus putting both orientations on equal ground.

226 Ibid, 3.
227 Althaus-Reid and Isherwood, “Thinking Theology and Queer Theory,” 305.
228 Filax, “Politicising Action Research Through Queer Theory,” 139.
229 Ibid, 2.
Queer theory attempts to eliminate this binary. Wilcox defines it as “analytical approaches that radically challenge societal norms and assumptions regarding gender and sexuality.”\(^{231}\) Furthermore, Schneider and Roncolato add that queer theory “works to expose the inherent instability of all sexual identities, including the heterosexual, and it works to construct categories of thought that allow for greater fluidity, multiplicity, and change.”\(^{232}\) Queer theory aims to reframe the notion that there is a stable nature to heterosexuality that is not present within homosexuality, through the elimination of the idea of normality is interchangeable with heterosexuality.

The apologia of same-sex couples may reframe societal norms as the children presenting these defenses do not accept the statements made against same-sex marriage and families as truthful. This study will show how their apologia tore down the boundaries of normal and abnormal to create an inclusive societal idea, and how their defenses attempted to rid society of heteronormativity by using apologia to show that their families exist as normal and stable units. Therefore, this study analyzed how the rhetoric of same-sex children employed apologia to demystify homosexuality and redefine the social norm as inclusive of same-sex parents.

**Conclusion**

While the testimonies provided by the children of same-sex parents exist within the larger frame of queer rhetoric, they are, by nature, distinct within themselves and therefore can be grouped into a sub-genre. Due to their life experiences, the voices of these particular children stand apart from any other speakers, either for or against gay

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\(^{232}\) Schneider and Roncolato, “Queer Theologies,” 2.
marriage, because they exist both within and apart from the issue of gay marriage. These children, coming from all over the United States and of various ages, may only have one thing in common (i.e. their parentage), but that one quality unites them into a unique group of people with a unique perspective on same-sex marriage.

By placing discourses from this exclusive group into a sub-genre of apologia and queer theory, I studied how the texts worked toward redefining same-sex marriage through their defensive responses. Children of same-sex couples presented the normality of their families in order to devalue the claim that homosexuals create abnormal families; thus, framing the genre of apologia by queer theory illustrated how these children used these defenses to redefine the idea of family. By studying the rhetorical tools used and understanding how these texts employed apologia, I was able to understand if the children of same-sex parents used their rhetorical defenses to reframe the binaries that existed within sexuality and family.

Therefore, my methodology consisted of the following: I completed a close textual read of the rhetoric in question. I identified apologia within the texts and established which types of strategies were used. Among the various texts used, I also looked for patterns of defensive strategies between the statements. Finally, I analyzed these strategies to understand how the children of same-sex parents defended their families, and whether that defense effectively restored and/or redefined the idea of family.
CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS

Since 1998, Google decorated its main page display logo with celebratory images on holidays, anniversaries and other important days. These images became known as the Google Doodles. On February 7, 2014, with the 22nd Winter Olympics opening ceremony approaching, Google’s Doodle featured images of various Olympic sports highlighted by a background resembling a multi-colored flag. Underneath the image read the quote, “The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.” The quote was taken directly from the Olympic Charter’s “Fundamental Principles of Olympism.” The Washington Post referred to this as Google’s “most

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political Doodle yet" due to the statement it indirectly made with regard to Russia’s 2013 response to homosexuality.

In the wake of an increased global acceptance of the gay community, Russia’s 2013 law banning “pro-gay” propaganda raised concerns. The Associated Press identified the bill as stigmatizing “Russia’s gay community and [banning] the distribution of information about homosexuality to children.” A Washington Post article quotes the law as designed to protect children, but in a manner that equated “homosexuality with pedophilia.”

Dmitry Kozak, the Russian minister who oversaw the Olympics in 2014, told the Post that lesbians and gays would not be under threat in Russia so long as they stayed away from minors. The enforcement of this anti-gay rights law during the international Olympic Games received immediate backlash by many United States companies and sponsors, such as AT&T, DeVry University and Chobani, who issued statements expressing opposition to the law. Google effectively joined these voices with the update of their Doodle.

The company released their new Doodle midday on February seventh, half a day before its typical update at midnight Eastern Time, allowing for the logo to be

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240 Ibid.
242 Ibid.
available at the start of the day in Russia. Google made no statement about the Doodle, other than saying they wished for the image to speak for itself. The Associated Press reported that Google has spoken out against discrimination of gays since 2008, when it supported the campaign against the gay marriage ban in California. In 2012, the company also began a “Legalise Love [sic]” campaign, “as a call to decriminalize homosexuality and eliminate homophobia around the world.” Therefore, while this type of defense was not Google’s first in support of the gay rights movement, it remained unique because it addressed not only an international affair, but a law that expressed concern for the influence of homosexuality on children.

This chapter explores another defense against claims that homosexuality damages children: the defense of same-sex parents through the voices of the children raised by them. The defenses studied are presented by these children, speaking out in direct opposition to arguments against same-sex parents. These three texts within this study were analyzed to understand how these children used apologia to combat claims about the value of their families. The analysis was completed by first identifying the types of apologia used and then evaluating the use of such strategies in order to understand how they redefine the idea of family and marriage.

In total, there were fifty-six identified instances of apologia within the texts. Of these fifty-six, all fell under the category of reducing the offensiveness of an event. The sole use of this particular category implies that these children were looking not to make

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243 Ibid.
244 Ibid.
245 Ibid.
246 Ibid.
up for their parents actions, but to redefine them by altering the audiences’ perceptions of their parents’ actions. Of the fifty-six defenses identified, nineteen used bolstering, another nine employed differentiation and twenty-eight utilized transcendence. The combination of these three sub-strategies allowed for these texts to do the following: bolster the positives of what their parents do, differentiate the reality of their family from any negative perception, and transcend damaging opinions of homosexual parents by altering the conceptualization of family and equality. The following sections, broken down by strategic method and resulting effect, will highlight the various defenses and their influence toward reframing a heteronormative view of marriage and redefining family.

Bolstering

Bolstering apologia is used when a speaker attempts to change audience perception of the subject by aligning their seemingly negative actions with something viewed more favorably. In essence, bolstering apologia is used to show that the defended speaker does not participate in harmful behavior. The children of same-sex parents use this strategy specifically in the following ways: by illustrating the situations of children brought up by same-sex parents as comparable to children in heterosexual families, and by presenting the normality of their day-to-day lives.

Throughout the three texts there is a variety of similar language that bolsters the image of the parents. Many of the children use words such as “support,”

“encourage,” and “care” when telling of how their parents raised them. For instance, Sarah Gogin says, “My high school experience was like many other hormonal teen girls’ high school experiences….You name it; I went through it – with my dads’ support every step of the way.” Gogin is not only stating that she experienced a normal life for a teen girl, but that her parents did as any other parents should, and supported her through it. In another example, Daniel Martinez-Lewis says, “My dads really encourage me to excel in life. Since I want to be a cook when I grow up, they’re letting me take cooking classes. My parents want me to improve, whether it’s schoolwork, or my social life.” Here, Martinez-Lewis shows how his parents encourage and support his interests in cooking in order to help him. These two examples, among others that speak of the encouragement and support their parents provide, reduce the perception that homosexual couples have a negative influence over children by showing that, on the contrary, they provide a positive influence for their children through their support and guidance. In essence, they behave as typical parents.

The children also use bolstering defenses to reduce negative perception by showing the similarities a family raised by same-sex couples has to that of the other family forms – or, in other words, by showing the “normality” of their family form. This effort is made by both illustrating the shared values between the family variations, and by presenting the everyday actions and happenings of their family. For instance, Zach Wahls and Sarah Gogin shared that quality family time is valued in their homes. Gogin says,

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248 Daniel Martinez-Leffew, Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts.
249 “Supreme Court: Hear the Voices of Our Children.” Family Equality Council, 10; 13.
250 Ibid, 14.
251 Daniel Martinez-Leffew, Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts.
“[W]e sit down together. We eat dinner together. And we talk,”252 and Wahls adds, “You know, when I’m home we go to church together, we eat dinner, we go on vacations. But, you know, we have our hard times too, we get in fights.”253 These comments present a level of normality to same-sex parents – an equilibrium that is typically found within idealized families – which builds the image of the values within as similar to that of its heterosexual counterpart. Both Wahls and Gogin talk of eating dinner together and spending time with their families, which is a standardized idea of what a family should do. The amicus brief also provides quotes from two children discussing how their parents have made them more openly accepting and community driven.254 This shows that same-sex parents do good things for the children they raise, by making them more open-minded and selfless.

The next way these texts used bolstering defenses is through removing the reality of their family from the perception of abnormality by showing the normality of their own daily activities. Presenting their daily interactions and activities allows them to distance their families from the perception of abnormality in families raised by same-sex couples through aligning themselves with what is perceived as “normal.” For instance, Martinez-Lewis tells that his one father is a deputy sheriff, while his other stays at home to take care of him and his sister.255 The idea of a family where one parent works and the other is a “stay-at-home” parent is common within traditional families. On the other hand, Brian Arsenault describes how both of his mothers go to work every day, “like other

253 Zach Wahls, “What Makes a Family?”
255 Daniel Martinez-Leffew, Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts
parents,” which highlights the idea that their family is like any other set of working parents. Working parents in either any family form provide support and security for the children they raise. Arsenault continues to add, “They cook dinner and mow the yard. They take care of the house. Volunteer in the community. Pay their bills. Do the thousands of little things that keep a household running.” Again, these examples offer normal occurrences within a same-sex parented household to show how similar the family variations can be. They show families providing positive examples for their children by doing the types of tasks that all good parents do: take care of their house, volunteer in the community, and pay their bills.

Many other examples from the texts illustrate the “normal” actions in which their families partake. Austin Covey says, “We go to the movies, they take me to my sports practice, play games, and make the holidays, especially Christmas, awesome.” Malina Simard-Halm adds that, “We watch movies together, play board games, my dad cooks for me, and my other dad drops us off at school.” All of the examples continue to demystify what happens within a family raised by a homosexual couple. By giving actual examples of their daily activities, it takes away the mystery that may surround the process and actions of same-sex parents and their children, therefore making the thing the audience doesn’t understand (i.e. same-sex parents) comparable to something they do (i.e. heterosexual parents). Thus, breaking down the misperceptions that surround the effect of homosexual parents on their children, and reshaping the idea of same-sex parents as positive.

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256 “Supreme Court: Hear the Voices of Our Children.” Family Equality Council, 10-11.
257 Ibid.
259 Ibid.
Furthermore, these children use examples of their own abilities and success to bolster their parentage. Zach Wahls tells of his percentile on the ACT, his commitment to Eagle Scouts, and how he owns and operates his own small business.\(^\text{260}\) Samuel Putnam-Ripley explains that he lives a typical life for an eighth grader, saying, “I play football and baseball for my school, I’m an honor student, I like girls, and I enjoy hanging out with my friends.”\(^\text{261}\) Sarah Gogin adds, “My childhood was like any other. Plaid skirts and Peter Pan collars itched from K through 8 at St. Gabriel’s school, where I participated in the Academic Decathlon, winter and spring performances, and athletic teams including soccer, volleyball, basketball, and baseball.”\(^\text{262}\) All of the activities and achievements presented continue to break away from any perception that children raised by same-sex couples lack stability by demonstrating that they experience the same desires and participate in the same activities as children from other homes. Therefore, by presenting these mundane activities they remove themselves from the belief that they, due to being raised by same-sex couples, are not a typical, well-adjusted kid and thereby bolstering the abilities of their parents.

A final bolstering defense comes from Daniel Martinez-Lewis, who builds up the image of same-sex couples by aligning his own unique situation to the positively viewed concept of adoption. Martinez-Lewis tells, “When I was in foster care I was told that I was considered unadoptable because of my Goldenhar syndrome. That is a genetic disorder that affects the whole left side of my body.”\(^\text{263}\) He then continues to explain that he was separated from his little brother because his brother’s adoptive parents weren’t

\(^{260}\) Zach Wahls, “What Makes A Family?”
\(^{261}\) “Supreme Court: Hear the Voices of Our Children.” Family Equality Council.
\(^{262}\) Ibid.
\(^{263}\) Daniel Martinez-Leffew, Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts.
willing to take him due to his medical conditions. Martinez-Lewis says, “Lucky for me, that’s when my two dads came along.”264 His personal story bolsters the image of same-sex parents by showing them as more open and accepting, and by creating a sympathetic eye for their willingness to adopt a child others would not.

The use of bolstering defenses aligns same-sex couples with a positively viewed idea or concept. The examples pulled from the texts illustrated that families with same-sex parents are positive and good by equating them with positively viewed concepts, such as parental support, child success and normality. These defenses, consequentially, reframed the ideas of heteronormativity by exhibiting that the perceived abnormal is not actually abnormal at all. The binary exists solely because homosexuality is viewed as outside the norm in society. Therefore, by bolstering the image of homosexual couples and their families and making them comparable to the perceived norm, the binary is eradicated.

Differentiation

Apologia that uses differentiation tries to distinguish an act from a perceived larger offensive context. This allows the action to then be seen as favorable by transforming audience opinion of that action’s relationship to an offensive context. That is, differentiation apologia shows that the accused defender does not perform actions perceived as negative. The children of same-sex couples use nine instances of differentiation, and the particulars of these attempt to show that despite the undeniable differences of families with same-sex parents, these differences do not necessary make

264 Ibid.
them abnormal or wrong. Therefore, they distinguish their parents’ sexual orientation from an offensive context. Same-sex parents are viewed as abnormal and the use of differentiation apologia attempts to separate these families from any negative opinion by presenting them as different, but also normal.

In using bolstering defenses, the children employed language that directly tried to combat the idea that their families are abnormal. Words and phrases such as, “as normal as,”265 “isn’t so different from any other,”266 and “different by some standards but similar in most ways,”267 show that these children are aware of the way society views their families as different, yet refuse to accept this difference as invalid or negative. This language shows that despite this awareness, despite their differences, they are not what they are perceived to be. A prime example of this use of language is in Malina Simard-Halm’s defense: “However, the simple notion that one type of family deserves more concessions than another stigmatizes families like mine. I know that we are not inferior, simply extraordinary.”268 She not only addressed that same-sex parents receive unfair treatment but that this unfair treatment set her family apart. Simard-Halm refused to accept that this makes her family less. Through her language she brought up the binary that exists – the binary that same-sex parents are the abnormal and heterosexual parents are the normal – but in turn reframed it by identifying her family as not opposite or inferior, but simply “extraordinary.” Instead of using the typical opposing term to “inferior,” instead of calling her family “superior,” she classifies them as simply

265 Daniel Martinez-Leffew, Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts.
266 Zach Wahls, “What Makes A Family?”
different. This reframes the binary by refusing to accept that her family is of lesser value than, or exists in opposition to, any other.

Martinez-Lewis also reframes the binary by identifying the difference between his family and others, but not accepting that it makes them abnormal. He says, “My family is just as valuable and worthwhile as any other,” and “Lucky for us, though, you also don’t believe in taking away a right, even from people like us.” Saying “as any other” makes it evident that he knows there are apparent differences in the variations of families, but that his is just as valuable as others, no matter the family parental structure. This is exemplified in the second statement as well, through his use of “even from people like us” which again implies the differences between the families without accepting that these differences are negative or that they make them worthy of lesser treatment. He does not ignore the fact that same-sex parents are different in some respect, but focuses instead on the fact that, despite those differences, families with same-sex parents still deserve the same treatment under the law.

One way same-sex parents are viewed as negative or different is through their influence on children. Zach Wahls directly addressed the question of “can gays even raise kids?” through saying, “In my 19 years, not once have I ever been confronted by an individual who realized independently that I was raised by a gay couple. And you know why? Because the sexual orientation of my parents has had zero effect on the content of my character.” As all the other children who utilize differentiation, he separated the negativity directed at same-sex couples from the reality of their situation. His statement

269 Daniel Martinez-Leffew, Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts.
270 Ibid.
illustrated that while his family is different, that difference is not apparent in who he is or how he was raised. He showed that the sexual orientation of his parents has not hindered his ability to grow or succeed in society. Though his parentage may be different, it is not necessary negative simply because of that fact. Thus, his statement differentiated the reality from the perception that same-sex couples are bad simply because they are different.

Through the use of differentiation, the children of same-sex couples removed the reality of who they are, and what same-sex parents do, by arguing that being different doesn’t make them abnormal. They reframe the binary by showing that family variations don’t exist as good and bad, or right and wrong, but merely different. Thus, their language removes the perception of same-sex parents as “invalid” or “abnormal” and rejects the heteronormative view of family.

*Transcendence*

The transcendence sub-strategy reduces the offensiveness of an event by altering the audience’s perception or belief about an action or idea through bonding it to a broader, more accepted contextual understanding. Within the texts, transcendence apologia transforms the audience’s ideas about same-sex parents by broadening their perception of what the terms “family” and “equality” encompass. Therefore, reframing heteronormativity by attempting to restructure and redefine these terms into more inclusive concepts.

The redefinition of what “family” means is done primarily through broadening the understanding of family to be identified not by the individual members or make-up, but
by the love and equality within. The children of same-sex couples accomplish this by directly identifying what family means through both personal references and repeated indication that what makes a family is the love within, not government labels. For instance, Martinez-Lewis, in his letter to the Supreme Court judge said, “Family means a lot of different things to a lot of different people, but some people believe that you have to have the same blood to be a family. You and I both know that family goes deeper than blood.”

Martinez-Lewis uses the similar situation between himself and his sister and judge’s own adopted children to illustrate the likelihood that the judge wouldn’t define his family as anything other than a family, no matter their bloodline. Martinez-Lewis continues to add, “I was lucky to be adopted by two guys I can both call dad. They give me and my sister so much love.” This quote emphasizes a reoccurring thought presented by these children: what defines us as a family is not our sexual orientation, bloodline or members, rather it is love. They are stressing that where there is love, there is family.

Redefining family as constituted by the love we feel instead of the labels we hold or gender of those involved is shown in various examples. Austin Covey states, “Marriage is about family and my dads take the best care of me and my brother. My family is no different than any other family.” Regardless of having same-sex parents, Covey states he is taken care of and loved. In conjunction with “my family is no different than any other,” he makes the statement that these components actually comprise a family, not shared blood or social labels. Another example comes from Zach Wahls.

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273 Ibid.
274 “Supreme Court: Hear the Voices of Our Children.” *Family Equality Council*
When the Iowa court met to vote on illegalizing same-sex marriage, Wahls asked, “So will this vote affect my family? Would it affect yours?” Here, Wahls is rejecting the idea that “family” is only an acceptable term when recognizing a heterosexual one. He questioned if the vote to keep gay couples from marrying would actually affect what and who his family is, as opposed to just taking away their rights. He challenges the families in the audience to consider if their own would be affected without the marriage label, or their rights, attached to them. Wahls says, “After all, your family doesn’t derive its sense of worth from being told by the state: ‘You’re married. Congratulations.’” This statement highlights the belief that withholding the right to marry from same-sex couples wouldn’t make them less of a family, due to a family not really being defined by its label. Just as a heterosexual family without rights would still be considered a family, so too would a homosexual one.

While trying to restructure what family means, the children present their various struggles with how government acknowledgement influences their perception of their family. While they do not feel the worth of their parents’ relationship is less due to sexual orientation, knowing the government refuses to recognize their union seems to degrade that worth. For example, Elizabeth Byrnes-Mandelbaum says, “It really hurts me that my family isn’t recognized by the government, it makes me feel like we aren’t seen as a family, which makes me feel insecure.” In conjunction, Kasey Nicholson-McFadden tells that, “It doesn’t bother me to tell kids my parents are gay. It does bother me to say

275 Zach Wahls, “What Makes A Family?”
276 Zach Wahls, “What Makes A Family?”
277 “Supreme Court: Hear the Voices of Our Children.” Family Equality Council, 27.
they aren’t married. It makes me feel that our family is less than a family.”278 Another child, unnamed and quoted in the amicus brief adds, “I worry about my little sisters and the lingering doubt in their minds about how legitimate their family is compared to their friends’ families. It’s a corrosive feeling of doubt. They really struggle with it.”279 These statements show concern for the security and stability of their family’s value being demeaned by the government’s exclusivity. They address that the law affects their perception of family, not because of their parents’ sexual orientation, but because their parents are not granted the same rights. Thus, making them feel less stable and secure. These children transcend the idea that family is not defined by its government label, but by what the term means to them. It is not the love within that degrades them as a family, but the fact that the government refuses to recognize that love as legitimate.

The children of same-sex parents also try to redefine their parents’ worth by transcending the audience perception of “equality” into a more inclusive concept. For instance, Daniel Martinez-Lewis says, “It is important that all families are protected and valued. In our country we may not all be the same, but we are all Americans and deserve an equal chance at bettering our lives.”280 Zach Wahls pushed the issue a bit further, directly addressing what a family like his expected from their government. He says, “We just hope for equal and fair treatment from our government,”281 and “so what you’re voting here isn’t to change us. It’s not to change our families; it’s to change how the law views us; how the law treats us.”282 These statements transcend the current worth of

278 Ibid, 28.
279 Ibid, 23
280 Daniel Martinez-Leffew, Daniel’s Letter to Chief Justice Roberts.
same-sex parents by questioning the span of equality. They show that limiting equality by sexual orientation isn’t actually providing equality at all. Wahls’ defense wasn’t only that his family deserved equal treatment, but that equality should be inclusive of all families, as not providing them with fair treatment doesn’t stop them from being a family, but instead makes them unequal in the eyes of the law. Therefore, equality, similar to love, should not be based on sexual orientation.

Overall, the children of same-sex couples used transcendence apologia to expand the concept of what it means to be a family. They redefined “family” as inclusive, constituted by love, regardless of sexual orientation, and showed that the label provided by a government approved marriage does not take away their right to be a family; it simply makes them feel unequal and undervalued. Therefore, these defenses transcend standard understanding of families with same-sex parents by broadening the inclusivity of the definition. Thus, they eliminate the need for labels and make it easier to identify families built on same-sex love as an acceptable family form. This effectively diminishes the power of heteronormativity by removing the sexual binary entirely from the issue. These children defend their parents by arguing that families are and should not be classified by sexual orientation, but how much love is shown.

Conclusions

These three strategies – bolstering, differentiation, and transcendence – all come together to allow the children of same-sex parents to defend their families by reducing the perceived offensiveness of their parents’ lifestyle. They bolstered their parents’ relationships and their own development with positive images; they differentiated their
family reality from the negative perceptions in society; and they transcended the concept of “family” and “equality” to be more inclusive of same-sex parents by equating them to the conception of love. These various defenses reshaped the definition of family by aligning the alternative family form with the standardized one and showing how their similarities were greater than their differences. Thus, these arguments reframed the binaries of sexuality and family by separating the sexual orientation of their parents from the reality of their family life. The same-sex parented family is thus removed from the projection of abnormality through identifying how typical and standard their families and lives actually were, despite the parents’ sexual orientation.

As noted, all the defenses presented by the children of same-sex parents were under the category of reducing the offensiveness of an event. The lack of variation in strategic form within these defenses is explicable given the type of argument being made by the children. Their defenses strove to garner acceptance and inclusivity for their parents. Thus, the other four categories of apologia – denial, evading responsibility, corrective action, and mortification – were not applicable. The children of same-sex parents were defending against claims that their parents should not have the right to marriage and their families should not be classified as a stable family structure. They did so by attempting to alleviate the view of their families as abnormal. Therefore, reasonably, they would not present defenses that deny blame for an accusation due to the nature of the accusation itself. As well, the accusations did not place them responsible for any particular deed. That is, the accusations were against their state of being rather than a particular action. Therefore evading, correcting or seeking forgiveness for their actions would be outside their area of defense. Further, seeking mortification or offering apologia
to correct an act would imply that the children see fallibility or immorality in their parents’ actions, and consequently would not be a defense against the accusations at all. Their overall goal is not to change or deny their parents’ actions or way of life, but to seek acceptance of them.

Another interesting note is that under the category of reducing the offensiveness of an event, three of the sub-strategies were not included in the exclusive use of this single strategy. The three unemployed defenses were minimization, attacking the accuser, and compensation. While these defenses are useful in other contexts, they again would have diverted from the overall goal of acceptance. Minimization attempts to show an action as less than it is – the children of same-sex parents however did not want to lessen their parents doings, but simply change the way those actions were perceived. Attacking the accuser would have been ineffective due to possibly offending or isolating the members of society who disagreed with their defenses, given society as whole, in these instances, provided the accusations against same-sex marriage. Finally, it would not have fit or helped the goal of acceptance to offer any sort of compensation. Again, they were not trying to make-up for a wrongdoing, but change the perception the audience holds. Overall, the only three strategies which allowed for the defenders to reach their intended goal of expressing same-sex marriage as being different but not wrong and of redefining family under the concept of love, were the three found within in this study: bolstering, differentiation and transcendence.

These three strategies and the defenders which utilized them presented a unique defense for same-sex parents. The children were raised by the people in question, and therefore had the distinct ability to speak on and clarify the truth of their family form
where others could not. This study analyzed these three texts, and the fifty-six defenses within, to find that the children of same-sex couples defended their parents against negative perceptions by demystifying same-sex parents and redefining the inclusivity of the social norm. In essence, they rejected the concept of heteronormativity through denying that their differences constituted them as negative or abnormal. These defenses stressed the idea that if the heterosexual family can raise children, so can alternative family forms, as a family is built on the love provided and not sexual orientation within.
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In 2010, two homosexual men, Dan Savage and Terry Miller, created a YouTube video to help inspire troubled youth to feel hope.\textsuperscript{283} They created the video as a response to the suicides of bullied adolescents and to show LGBT youth, through describing their own situation, that “yes, it does indeed get better.”\textsuperscript{284} This single video sparked a worldwide movement, where more than 50,000 similar videos were submitted from people around the globe.\textsuperscript{285} Since submission, these videos have been viewed more than 50 million times and include messages from people such as President Barack Obama, Ellen DeGeneres, organizations like Google, and many more.\textsuperscript{286} Despite these names, the It Gets Better Project staff states, “For us, every video changes a life. It doesn’t matter who makes it.”\textsuperscript{287}

The project identified its mission as “to communicate to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth around the world that it gets better, and to create and inspire the changes needed to make it better for them.”\textsuperscript{288} They aimed to show hopeless youth a

\textsuperscript{283} It Gets Better, “What is the It Gets Better Project?” Itgetsbetter.org, http://www.itgetsbetter.org/pages/about-it-gets-better-project/
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{285} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{286} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{287} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{288} Ibid.
positive future where they themselves possibly could not see one. A 2010 New York Times article quoted a video from Joel Burns, city councilman in Fort Worth, who presented his statement at a city council meeting. They quoted Burns as being “succinct” as he tells youth, “The attitudes of society will change. Please live long enough to be here to see it.”

As this study has mentioned, the attitudes of society have changed. Americans are becoming increasingly more accepting of same-sex marriage. The intention of this study was to analyze the rhetoric of children within raised by homosexual parents to understand how they view and defend their parents’ sexual orientation during these changing times. By analyzing these statements, this study found patterns throughout the texts that linked their statements together and showed how children of same-sex parents defended their families, as well as the gay rights movement as a whole. They defended their families in three ways: by showing same-sex couples don’t do negative things and thus bolstering their image; by showing they also do good things to differentiate the reality of their situation from the false perceptions; and by transcending the societal idea of family to be defined by love. Therefore, they contributed to the potential normalization of same-sex couples, their right to marriage, and the families they may raise by showing how their families, as an example of others like them, are as normal as other family forms.

LGBT advocates can also employ similar argument strategies in the future. Eliminating the binaries of sexuality and the belief in heteronormativity is shown to have the possibility of becoming an effective approach to normalizing homosexuality. LGBT advocates need to raise those they defend to an equal level in society by continuing to

290 Joel Burns, It Gets Better, YouTube video, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ax96cghOnY4
reject the belief that homosexuality is the abnormal and emphasizing the love that exists in these types of families. Through future use of the defense strategies found within the analyzed texts, advocates can defend that the LGBT community is merely different, not abnormal. They can strive for the overall goal of acceptance and equality, similar to the children in this study, by using defense strategies that do not show their actions as immoral or incorrect, but instead cast them in a different, more positive light. Thus, advocates can continue to redefine love for society to be inclusive of all peoples.

Another contribution this study makes is with regard to same-sex parents. As this alternative family form becomes more prominent within society, more questions, concerns and criticisms appear about the ability of gay couples to raise children, and what direct influence they may have during childhood development. This study not only provided examples of that influence, but those examples derived from what the amicus brief describes as a previously unheard and disregarded voice: the children within these homes.291 Using themselves as models of what positive influence same-sex couples can have on children, the speakers within this study eliminated the binaries between homosexual and heterosexual families. By analyzing the defenses they presented, this study took these previously unheard and overlooked voices to show how powerful they have the potential to become in the defense of their parents, from their unique place within the battle for equal rights. In advocating ethically and effectively for their parents, these children modeled the argument that same-sex parents can raise good and decent children.

Through an analysis of these voices, this study helps understand arguments for same-sex couples becoming parents. Society views same-sex parents negatively, but the

children of those parents make clear and strong attempts to change that perception through using apologetic rhetoric to redefine what family should mean. Instead of viewing properly structured families as consisting of the standard within society – the “nuclear” family – or identifying family based on the components that constitute it, they argue families should be defined by the love within. Further they make the case that a family should not be defined simply as a heterosexual mother and father, raising their biological children. Viewing family in this manner is exclusive of not just the same-sex parented family, but all other variations of the standard family form. It excludes the more commonly seen and accepted family varieties, such as single-parent households and adopted children. Defining family, instead, by love allows for inclusivity of all types and varieties of families, through identifying them by the support, care and affection between the members – no matter the members’ marital status, government label, bloodline or sexual orientation. Thus, by redefining what society understands a family to be, homosexual couples are validated as acceptable just like any other form of parent.

Furthermore, by changing the way society as a whole defines terms such as love and family, the children help to reshape society by removing discrimination from the equation. Instead of identifying someone based on who they are, what they look like or who they love, identification and qualification is based on what they do and how much love they show. This is the same idea that can be seen in workplace gender discrimination cases, in the African-American civil rights movement and challenges faced by immigrants – the capabilities of genders, races, and people of different sexual orientation should not be decided due to their particular biological qualities, but their ability to perform deeds and to fulfill needs.
However, this analysis and its conclusions are not without limitations. This study was heavily constrained by the small amount of texts analyzed. While these three were effective for the length and purpose of this analysis, there is a possibility that using only three texts restricted the defense strategies found, and thus the overall findings. Should children from same-sex homes use strategies other than bolstering, differentiation and transcendence, the overall conclusions of this study would be different. Therefore, an area of future research would be to broaden the texts analyzed, to see if children of same-sex parents use these same strategies in other contexts in defense of their parents and family structures. It would also be interesting to explore statements by children of same-sex parents that do not support their parentage, to see what strategies are used to defend the opposite end of the argument: that same-sex parents are detrimental to children’s upbringing.

There is also room for expansion of this study’s method to various other platforms. One other area of future research would be to analyze the way children defend or advocate on behalf of other issues in which they are involved. The defenses provided in this study have proven that children have a powerful capability to evoke change. By extending the literature of apologia to children, this study paved the way for them to be seen as advocates for a number of areas. This study explored how they spoke out against claims against their same-sex parents, defending their families against attacks. Consequently, it could prove relevant to further study how children may do the same in a variety of situations. Children could possibly act as advocates for divorced families, single-parent homes, adoption, and other issues where they are involved.
With the support for same-sex marriage increasing, and the nuclear family seen now as an option and not the norm, it is understandable that the support for same-sex parents will grow as well. However, before this growth can truly happen, before the perception of same-sex parents can “get better,” society has to begin looking at the conceptualization and meaning of family from a different viewpoint. As this study presented, and as the children of same-sex parents argued society needs to redefine its idea of what makes a family. As the voices in defense of gay marriage and gay families increase in prevalence, society will likely understand family as something not tied to sexual orientation; rather as tied to the love and support we provide to one another. As Zach Wahls stated, “The sense of family comes from the commitment we make to each other. To work through the hard times so we can enjoy the good ones. It comes from the love that binds us. That’s what makes a family.”

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APPENDIX

"The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practicing sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play." — Olympic Charter