



2014

Changing Counts, Counting Change: Toward a More Inclusive Definition of Family

Brian Powell
Indiana University–Bloomington

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/jiass>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Powell, Brian (2014) "Changing Counts, Counting Change: Toward a More Inclusive Definition of Family," *Journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences*: Vol. 17 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.
Retrieved from: <https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/jiass/vol17/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact digitalscholarship@butler.edu.

Keynote Address from the 84th Annual Meeting of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences

Changing Counts, Counting Change: Toward a More Inclusive Definition of Family*

BRIAN POWELL
Indiana University–Bloomington

ABSTRACT

Americans now live in a diversity of living arrangements—more so than ever before. Whether or not these living arrangements are counted as family can have direct consequences for people’s lives. Families enjoy many rights and privileges—both formal and informal—that are not provided to others. Understanding the boundaries that Americans make between “families” and “nonfamilies” tells us who is seen as deserving of these rights and privileges. In this article, Brian Powell discusses results of a U.S.-based study in which more than 2000 adults were interviewed about their stances regarding same-sex couples, cohabiting couples, same-sex marriage, and, most importantly, what counts as family. In examining how Americans are making sense of, and in some cases struggling with, changes in living arrangements in the United States, Powell makes predictions regarding the likely changes in Americans’ definitions over the next decade.

KEY WORDS Family; Sexuality; Public Opinion; Same-sex Families

I am honored to discuss my ongoing research on changes in Americans’ definitions of family in this journal. I am a bit embarrassed to admit that although I have been a professor at Indiana University–Bloomington for nearly three decades, I was not

* Brian Powell; Department of Sociology, 744 Ballantine Hall, 1020 E. Kirkwood Ave., Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405; powell@indiana.edu.

Special thanks to Catherine Bolzendahl, Claudia Gesit, and Lala Carr Steelman, my coauthors of *Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans’ Definition of Family*; to Oren-Pizmony-Levy, Kristin Jordan, Tim O’Brien, Jill Waity, and Lisa Warner, research associates for the 2010 wave of the Constructing the Family Survey; to Cher Jamison, the project manager for the 2003, 2006, and 2010 waves of the Constructing the Family Survey; and to the many undergraduate and graduate students who participated as interviewers for the project.

as familiar with the Indiana Academy of Social Sciences as I should have been. So, I did my homework and discovered that this organization is precisely the type of organization that professors, as well as universities and colleges, should be actively engaging in and promoting. What impresses me most about the IASS is its goal to transcend boundaries: geographical boundaries, institutional boundaries, and, perhaps most importantly and what I believe may be the future of academia, disciplinary boundaries.

This paper also discusses transcending boundaries—more specifically, transcending family boundaries. Surely, families matter to each of the disciplines represented at this conference—including anthropology, business and economics, gender studies, history, international/global studies, psychology, public policy, and sociology. As social scientists, we regularly invoke family in our scholarship, but we all too often assume that others share our definition of family, which, typically in the social sciences, is an expansive definition that covers multiple relationships and living arrangements.

How social scientists operationalize the very notion of family, however, may not necessarily correspond with public views and representations of family. For example, in preparing for this presentation, I Googled “family” and looked at its pictorial representations. The images presented a group of close-knit and happy people, but if one looks closer at these pictures, one will also notice that these groups almost always are made up of what appear to be a father, a mother, and their children (most often two children: an older boy and his younger sister). These pictures typify what Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith (1993) coined as the Standard North American Family (SNAF)—which strongly privileges heterosexual married households and, in particular, those that include children and those in which women and men assume traditional gender roles. The SNAF often is portrayed as “*the family*” and the gold standard by which other family arrangements are evaluated—often as “lesser” families or not as families at all. These other family arrangements—which are nearly invisible in the aforementioned Google images—include biracial families, single-parent families, adoptive families, childless families, and, most relevant to this paper, same-sex families.¹

Same-sex living arrangements have faced notable challenges—until recently, even insurmountable challenges—in being recognized as family. These challenges and the question regarding the status of same-sex couples (with and without their children) have been in the forefront of the news, with even CEOs of food companies offering their views regarding the definition of family, as illustrated by Chick-fil-A President and CEO Dan Cathy’s comments regarding his opposition to same-sex marriage: “Guilty as charged. . . . We are very much supportive of the family—the biblical definition of the family united. We are a family-owned business, a family-led business and we are married to our first wives” (quoted in Tsu 2012).

Whether same-sex households should be included in the definition of family has been at the center of political discourse. The platform of the Texas Republican Party, for example, makes the party’s position on this issue very clear: “Homosexuality must not be presented as an ‘alternative’ lifestyle, in public policy, nor should ‘family’ be redefined to include homosexual ‘couples’” (Republican Party of Texas Platform 2012). Not only

does this quote question whether same-sex couples should be seen as family, it also, by inserting quotation marks around the word *couple*, questions whether gays or lesbians are seen as capable of being in relationships.

A diametric, and more inclusive, vision of family is provided in the National Democratic Party platform:

We support the right of all families to have equal respect, responsibilities, and protections under the law. We support marriage equality and support the movement to secure equal treatment under law for same-sex couples. We also support the freedom of churches and religious entities to decide how to administer marriage as a religious sacrament without government interference. (Democratic National Platform 2012)

Ironically, missing from the media representations and political discourse are the American people. To what extent do Americans endorse the more circumscribed definition of family that excludes same-sex couples, with or without children? To what extent do they instead favor a broader definition that takes into account an array of relationships, including same-sex couples? To what extent have Americans' views of what counts and does not count as family shifted over time?

COUNTED OUT: SAME-SEX RELATIONS AND AMERICANS' DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY

I, along with my collaborators, Catherine Bolzendahl, Claudia Geist, and Lala Carr Steelman, answer these questions in our book *Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans' Definitions of Family* (2010). Our research team of undergraduate and graduate students conducted computer-assisted telephone interviews, under the supervision of Indiana University's nationally renowned Center for Survey Research, with a national representative sample of more than 2000 Americans. The 712 interviews from 2003 and 815 interviews from 2006 served as the empirical foundation of *Counted Out*. In 2010, our research team interviewed 831 Americans. These interviews also are referred to in this paper.

A unique feature of these interviews—which were taped and transcribed and averaged 44 minutes in 2003 and 25 minutes in 2006 and 2010²—is the inclusion of both closed-ended and open-ended questions, which enabled us not only to identify quantitative patterns (from the closed-ended questions) but also to better understand the reasoning behind Americans' definitions of family (from the open-ended questions). By listening to comments of our interviewees, for example, we discovered that a small but not inconsequential number of Americans seemed unable (as opposed to unwilling) to answer questions about their own sexual orientation (i.e., whether they were heterosexual, gay or lesbian, or bisexual). One woman responded, “I’m none of these things”; at least two women incongruously indicated, “I’m a white woman”; another

woman stated, “Well, I’m a woman and I’m married to a man. So, I’m a bisexual?” The difficulty in responding to this question was not limited to women, as illustrated by the following comments by men: “I like women. I like women. Whichever means I like women,” and “I’m Italian; I like women.” With additional probing, we were able to ascertain their sexual orientation, but these seemingly inexplicable responses may speak to the problems in self-labels among the unmarked (in this case, heterosexuals), a pattern similar to that found in recent scholarship on “whiteness” (Frankenberg, 1993). Without listening to their open-ended (both solicited and unsolicited) comments, we would not have discerned this phenomenon.

In the interviews, we asked questions regarding an array of family-related topics—for example, the influence of biological and social factors on child development, the effects of birth order, the optimal time to become a parent, the advantages or disadvantages of women (and men) changing their name at marriage, and the role that parents (vs. children and the government) should assume in college funding. In *Counted Out*, we relied mostly on Americans’ responses to a series of questions regarding the definition of family. We asked: “People these days have differing opinions of what counts as a family. Next, I will read you a number of living arrangements, and I will ask you whether you personally think this arrangement counts as family.” Of course, there are many different living arrangements that could fall under the category of family. In our interviews, we asked about 11 of these arrangements:

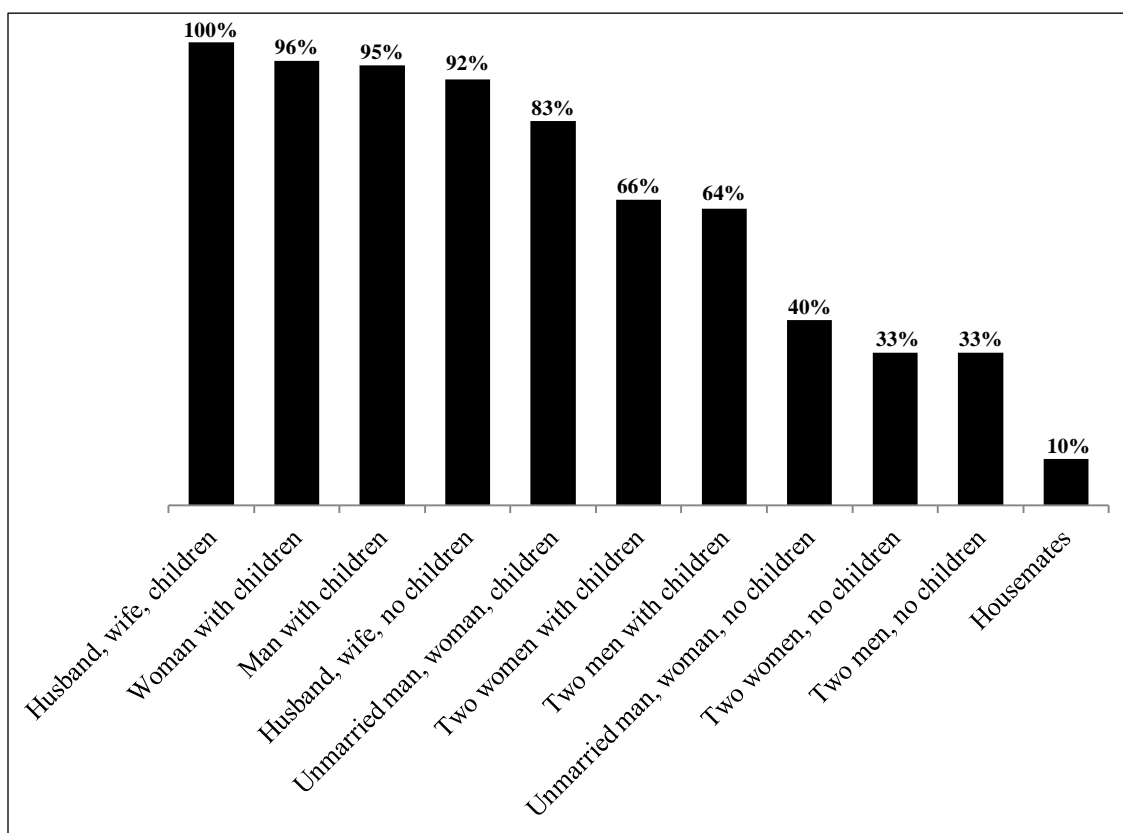
- A husband and a wife living together with one or more of their children
- A man and a woman living together as an unmarried couple with one or more of their children
- A man living alone with one or more of his children
- A woman living alone with one or more of her children
- Two women living together as a couple with one or more of their children
- Two men living together as a couple with one or more of their children
- A husband and a wife living together with no children
- A man and a woman living together as an unmarried couple who have no children
- Two people living together as housemates who are not living as a couple and have no children
- Two women living together as a couple who have no children
- Two men living together as a couple who have no children

These living arrangements vary along three key dimensions: whether the household includes one or two adults; if the household includes two adults, whether they are married, cohabiting, or single roommates; whether there are children in the household.

WHICH LIVING ARRANGEMENTS COUNT AS FAMILY?

The percentage of Americans in the 2010 survey who viewed each living arrangement as a family is displayed in Figure 1. Looking at these responses, we see a great deal of consensus over some living arrangements, but a great deal of dissent over others. Regarding consensus, everyone (100 percent) counted a husband, a wife, and their children as a family. Closely following were a single mother and her children (96 percent), a single father and his children (95 percent), and a married heterosexual couple without children (92 percent).

Figure 1. Which Living Arrangements Count as Family?



Source: Powell (2010).

There also was a great deal of agreement regarding housemates, but in this case, nearly everyone (90 percent) concurred that housemates did not count as a family. This pattern held even among young adults—including college-age adults who recently may have lived with housemates and, as one might expect, should be most open regarding this living arrangement. Ironically, the group that was most likely to say that housemates count as family consisted of people from the other side of the age spectrum: adults over the age of 64. Their greater receptiveness to what some refer to as “chosen family” may be due to their recognition of the increasing number of people from their generation who

share living facilities with nonrelatives and the decreasing number who live near their extended kin.³ We refer to this pattern as the “Golden Girls effect.” In this regard, the oldest participants in our survey were the most expansive. Indeed, this is the living arrangement in which this age group was the most open.

In contrast to their overall agreement that married heterosexual couples (with or without children) and single-parent households counted as family and that housemates did not, Americans expressed much more disagreement in their views regarding unmarried heterosexual couples and especially same-sex couples. Approximately five-sixths of Americans (83 percent) counted an unmarried heterosexual couple as family if it had children, but only two-fifths (40 percent) counted this couple as a family if it was childless. The numbers for same-sex couples are even lower: Almost two-thirds defined a lesbian couple (66 percent) or a gay male couple (64 percent) with children as a family, while only one-third (33 percent) counted either couple as a family if it was childless.

TYPOLOGIES OF FAMILY DEFINITIONS

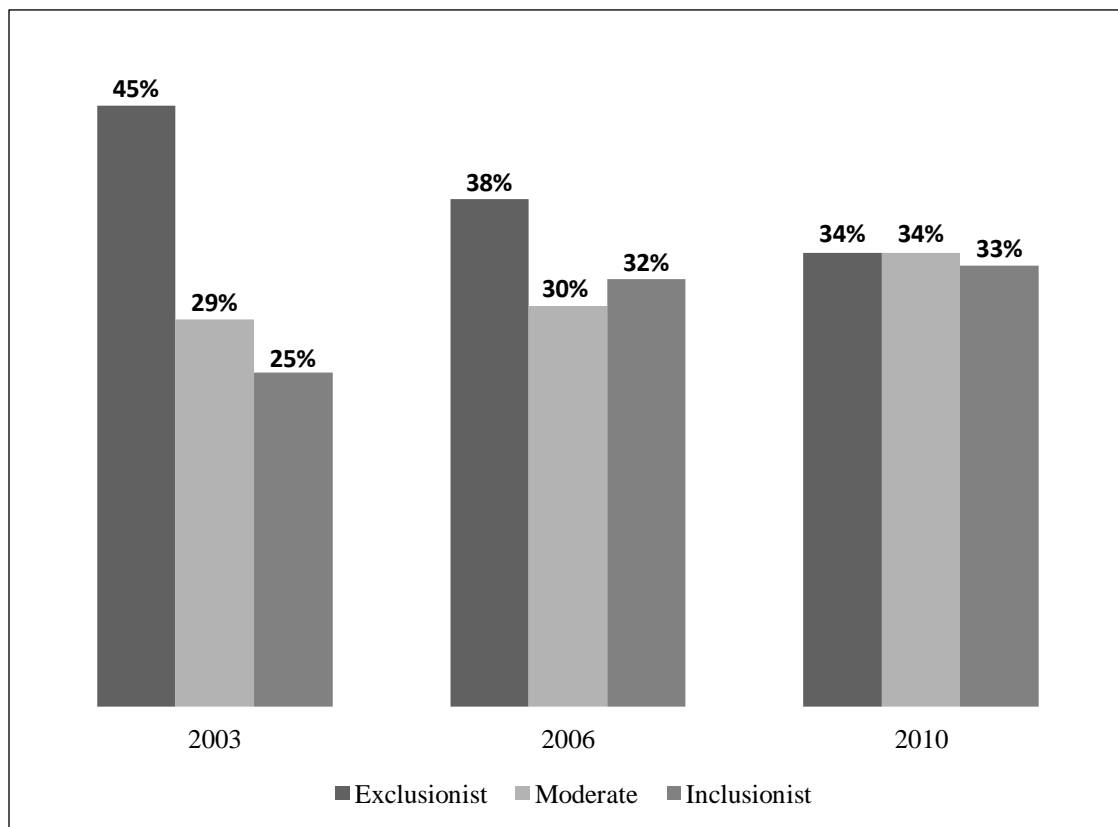
These percentages offer an overall picture of how Americans define family. To further explore Americans’ definitions, we next examined how their responses clustered together. Using a statistical technique known as latent class analysis, we identified three categories, or typologies, of Americans: exclusionist (also referred to as traditional), moderate (also referred to as transitional), and inclusionist (also referred to as modern).⁴

- *Exclusionists*: Exclusionists endorse the most restrictive definition of family of the three groups. Their responses correspond closely with the most “traditional” definition of family—as described above, the SNAF. To this group, heterosexual married households, particularly those that include children, constitute family. Exclusionists show more ambivalence about some other family forms (e.g., cohabiting heterosexual couples with children) but fervently oppose the inclusion of same-sex couples with or without children in the definition of family.
- *Inclusionists*: At the other end of the continuum, inclusionists embrace a very broad, all-encompassing definition of family that includes each living arrangement (other than roommates) as family. This group does not distinguish between households with and without children, between married and unmarried households, or—in sharp contrast to exclusionists—between same-sex and heterosexual households.
- *Moderates*: In my view the most intriguing of the three groups, moderates position themselves somewhere in the middle. If exclusionists are closed and inclusionists are open in their conceptualization of family, perhaps the best word to describe moderates is “ajar.” Moderates already include some same-sex living arrangements in their definition of family—most notably, same-sex couples with children (indeed, they include all married couples and all couples with children in their definition of family). As I discuss later, they also seem primed to become even more inclusive in the future.

CHANGES IN AMERICANS' DEFINITIONS OF FAMILY

The percentage of Americans who were exclusionist, moderate, or inclusionist in 2003, 2006, and 2010 is displayed in Figure 2. As a social scientist, I am well aware of how slow—even glacial—changes in public opinion can be. The change in Americans' definitions of family is a remarkable exception. In 2003, almost half (45 percent) of Americans were exclusionist. Far more Americans were exclusionist than either moderate (29 percent) or inclusionist (25 percent).⁵ By 2006, the number of exclusionist Americans decreased (to 38 percent), while the number of both moderates (30 percent) and inclusionists (32 percent) increased. By 2010, the country was evenly divided among exclusionists (34 percent), moderates (34 percent), and inclusionists (33 percent). In other words, approximately half of all Americans counted at least some type of same-sex couple (for example, a lesbian couple with children) as a family, but by 2010, two-thirds of Americans were willing to do so. Let me reiterate that this is one of the most remarkable, rapid changes in public opinion that we have ever witnessed.

Figure 2. Family Definition Typologies: Changes between 2003, 2006, and 2010



Source: *Constructing the Family Survey* (Powell 2003, 2006, 2010).

HOW AMERICANS TALK ABOUT FAMILY: EXCLUSIONISTS VS. INCLUSIONISTS

These percentages tell us a great deal about the distribution of exclusionists, moderates, and inclusionists in the United States, and about the striking shifts in responses. To better understand the rationale behind Americans' boundary-making between family and nonfamily, however, we must rely on how Americans talk about family. Accordingly, in our interviews, we asked: "In thinking about your answers to the past few questions about what counts as family, what determines for you whether you think a living arrangement is a family?" How exclusionists, moderates, and inclusionists answer this open-ended question brings important insight into Americans' attitudes regarding family that responses to the closed-ended questions cannot convey by themselves.

From exclusionists, we hear that marriage is fundamental: If married, a couple counts as family; if not married, then it usually is not. Illustrative of this view are the comments by a middle-aged white man: "The marriage . . . I feel pretty strongly about this because I've been married twice and I've been in a few of these situations. So, I think the marriage part makes it a family whether we want it to be or not sometimes."

Accompanying an emphasis on marriage is an emphasis on heterosexuality and a strong censuring of homosexuality. The disapproval, or animus, often is couched in religious terms: for example, "ordained by God," "in the eyes of God," "God's law," "God's intention," "in the Bible," "it's the rules, the Bible," "what the Bible says," and "the biblical standard." Among the more vociferous comments invoking religious terms were those by a middle-aged woman: "I see a family as a husband and wife or a single person with or without a child or children because they were ordained by God. And with Sodom and Gomorrah, God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Each of these cities from ancient times because all the sodomy and relationships that weren't right that could not be called family." When asked by the interviewer whether there was anything else she wanted to add, the woman responded: "Not especially, although I'd say a single person with a pet is a family."

Exclusionists also discussed children as important to the definition of family but often framed their importance in terms of blood ties: for example, "they're all blood related," "tied by blood," "one is related by blood," "marriage of blood relation," and "because you have blood to be a family, if the children carry the blood." To the extent that blood ties make a family, then, for this group, nonbiological children (e.g., adoptive children and foster children) are "lesser" than biological children. To assess this possibility, we asked exclusionists, moderates, and inclusionists whether foster children are family members. Exclusionists were the group least likely to strongly agree that foster children are family members.

Exclusionists' definitions of family rely on law, religion, and the structure of the relationship. In contrast, inclusionists' definitions focus on function: If a living arrangement acts like a family and feels like a family, it is a family. Critical to inclusionists' definition is relationship quality, as described by a middle-aged man: "A

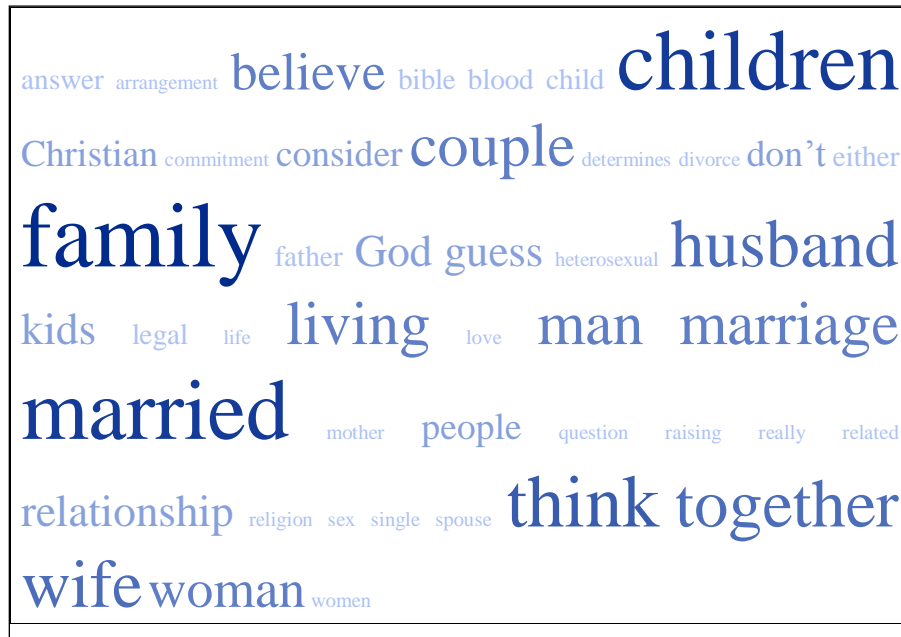
living arrangement doesn't make a family, period. How the people treat each other makes a family. How the respect between two people or between a group of people. Not just two people, but a group of people. Children as well as adults. How they are treated and how they are brought back together makes a family." A young woman echoed these sentiments: "Two people that care about each other and form a relationship that feels familial. That may be the only family that they have around, or, I don't know, living together in a comfortable setting, or I don't know. I feel like I'd have to have a rough draft [laughs], but, yeah, that's basically it. Pets counts, too. Definitely, 'cause I consider my dog like kind of a child. Actually, my child."

Some inclusionists went even further and indicated whether a living arrangement counted as a family should be determined by the those in the living arrangement. An older woman explained: "I think it depends on what the people think they have. If they have a family relationship, then that's family. What you think you are. You know if you're living together as a couple, then that's a family. Probably a lot depends on how these people consider themselves. So, I would say that's the determining factor: what the people think they are."

Comments such as these led us to add a question in the 2010 survey that asked whether respondents agreed or disagreed that "if two people think of themselves as family, they are a family." Approximately nine-tenths (89 percent) of inclusionists agreed, while nearly three-fourths (72 percent) disagreed. Moderates were in between (although closer to the views of inclusionists), with almost three-fifths (59 percent) in agreement.

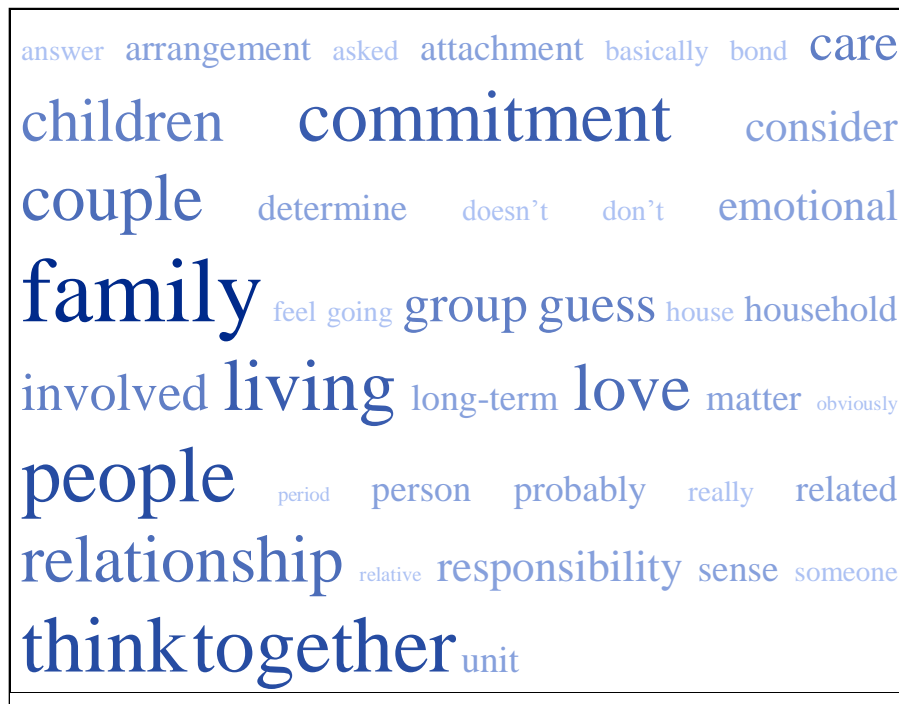
Perhaps the best way to visually present the diametric themes used by exclusionists and inclusionists is with the use of word clouds, which pictorially display the most frequently used words by each group (the more frequently used the word, the larger the font and the darker the word). As we can see in Figures 3 and 4, exclusionists and inclusionists relied on very different words when defining family. Of course, because they were explaining their views about family, it is not surprising that both groups regularly used the word "family." Among exclusionists, though, we can see a great emphasis on structure ("marriage," "married," "children"), law and religion ("Bible," "Christian," "God," "legal"), and gender/sex ("husband," "wife," "man," "woman"). With the exception of "children," these terms were rarely used by inclusionists. Instead of using gendered terms ("husband," "wife," "man," "woman"), inclusionists used terms that did not emphasize gendered distinctions ("people," "person"). Instead of using terms conveying structure, law, or religion, inclusionists were much more likely to use terms that connote affective ties ("attachment," "bond," "care," "commitment," "emotional"). To me, the two words used frequently by inclusionists that most clearly distinguish them from exclusionists are "commitment" and "love." This is not to say that exclusionists did not think commitment and love were important; however, the fact that inclusionists so regularly used these terms while exclusionists did not underscores the very different frames by which these two groups conceptualize family.

Figure 3. Most Frequently Used Words: Exclusionists



Source: Powell (2003).

Figure 4. Most Frequently Used Words: Inclusionists



Source: Powell (2003).

MODERATES: AN EVOLVING GROUP

Like exclusionists, moderates privileged marriage—and children—in their definition of family, but unlike exclusionists, moderates emphasized marriage and children for what they signified: quality of relationship, commitment, responsibility, and, as illustrated by the following response of an older woman, a guarantee: “Certainly when there’s children involved. I believe certainly when there’s children involved and when there’s a guarantee, particularly when there’s a marriage. Even if children aren’t involved.”

These qualities correspond quite closely with the very reason that inclusionists adopt a more open definition of family that emphasizes the quality and nature of relationships, but whereas inclusionists assume the presence of commitment in a relationship unless otherwise disconfirmed, moderates need confirmation of commitment—often in the form of legal status of parenthood, but also in the form of time together—before according family status to a household. A young woman explained:

Oh, God! Okay, to me, it’s like people that are planning on being together for a long period of time. Like being together forever. I’ve heard of best friends moving in together, and they’re kind of like family. So, to me, it’s two people that are going to be committed to each other for the long haul. . . . No, I mean I’m not saying that two men and two women can’t be in it for the long haul, but there’s nothing binding them together.”

Her comments underscore how the absence of marital rights to same-sex couples has provided an obstacle to their being seen as family. Her comments—and similar comments—also led us to ask a series of questions in 2006 and 2010 to test whether providing information regarding how long a same-sex couple lived together would affect moderates’ views regarding the couple. We found that if same-sex couples are presented as having lived together for a longer period of time (i.e., ten years), the percentage of moderates who counted these couples as family increased markedly. In other words, time together—not unlike marriage and children—is a persuasive marker of commitment that can push many moderates toward a more inclusive vision of family.

That moderates are potentially in transition—or, in the words of President Obama, “evolving”—can also be seen in the ways that moderates are grappling with issues regarding family. Moderates often were aware of the contradictions in their own responses, as exemplified in the comments by a late-middle-aged woman:

Well, if you have two or more individuals living together, and I’m probably contradicting myself. If you have two individuals living together and married, unmarried, whatever, and if they have children, yes, I consider that a family. But, then, you know, what really determines what a

family is. That's where you get into the full contradiction of everything.

When asked to clarify her comments, she explained: "Well, personally, I believe that it's two individuals together, whether they have the kids living there or not, then probably, in a sense, it is a family. So, I contradicted everything I said."

Because moderates were struggling with these issues and recognized the contradictions in their responses, they also were the group most likely to volunteer that they might change their minds in the future. As a middle-aged woman noted:

"I don't know. I don't know. Between my religious upbringing and my traditional upbringing, I don't know. I'm still working on this one for myself, and I still don't have one answer. . . . We're not adamant against it [same-sex couples], but like I said, I mean, process is changing. If you call me next year, I might change my mind."

She continued:

Well, you know, it's just traditional southern upbringing, where it's not like we knew homosexuals. But you know, it's hard to explain. . . . I was brought up one way, but I am slowly changing and considering other options. But I'm not total, you know, I haven't totally changed some of the things. So, that's why some of my answers have been like flip-flopping, 'cause I'm not adamant about some of the things. So, like I said, this is one of the areas that I'm thinking about. . . . It might be that under the right circumstances I could be convinced that it would be okay.

AMERICANS' VIEWS REGARDING SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

The previously quoted woman's comments, along with the comments of others, gave me great confidence in predicting that Americans' views on family and, by extension, same-sex marriage would become more expansive fairly quickly. What I did not predict, however, is how quick these changes would be. In 2003, nearly three-fifths (59 percent) of the Americans we interviewed opposed same-sex marriage, but by 2010, more Americans were in favor of same-sex marriage (52 percent) than opposed. The patterns we found have been confirmed in nearly every reputable national survey on the topic.

How do we explain the change? Between 2003 and 2010, nearly all exclusionists remained opposed to same-sex marriage, while nearly all inclusionists remained in favor. Still, the decrease in the number of exclusionists between 2003 and 2010 and the concurrent increase in the number of inclusionists partially account for the increase in

support of same-sex marriage. The impact of moderates may be even more important: Not only did the number of moderates increase, but the support for same-sex marriage among moderates increased over time. In 2003, moderates were torn about same-sex marriage, with approximately the same number in favor as opposed. By 2010, moderates moved leftward, with over two-thirds in favor of same-sex marriage.

Support for same-sex marriage remains geographically uneven, however. Southerners express the greatest resistance to inclusive (and moderate) definitions of family and same-sex marriage, while northeasterners and westerners express the most receptivity to such a broad array of living arrangements. Midwesterners fall in between: more tolerant than southerners but less broad-minded than westerners or northeasterners. Still, there is variation among midwestern states. As an illustration, while the state legislature in Indiana was debating whether to add a state constitutional amendment that prohibited same-sex marriage, the state legislature in Illinois was taking action to legalize same-sex marriage.

Urban/rural and regional (as well as other interstate) variation is very strong. It is so strong that residents from urban areas (and northeastern and western states) can be shocked by others' refusal to accept nontraditional family forms and same-sex marriage while their rural (and midwestern and southern) counterparts can be equally stunned by efforts to broaden the definition of family and marital rights. These differences mean that the rate of acceptance of same-sex marriage will continue to be uneven. At the time of the publication of this paper, 19 states allow same-sex marriage, while 31 prohibit it.

Although it is premature to predict whether—and, if so, how quickly—other states will move toward same-sex marriage or whether—and, if so, how quickly—state and federal courts will reach decisions regarding same-sex marriage that could make present state laws moot, it is safe to predict that same-sex marriage can change Americans' definitions of family. Both exclusionists and moderates discuss the primacy of marriage—for exclusionists because marriage connotes a legal bond, and for moderates because marriage signifies commitment. Same-sex marriage, then, could have a powerful effect on whether exclusionists and especially moderates count a same-sex couple as family.

To test this proposition, we asked in 2010 whether a legally married same-sex couple without children counted as family. Nearly three-fifths (59 percent) of Americans responded affirmatively—a dramatic increase over the 33 percent figure for childless same-sex couples (with marital status unspecified) mentioned earlier in this paper. Importantly, though, if we then specify that the married couple moved to a state that did not recognize same-sex marriage, the number of Americans who counted this couple as family was reduced (to 49 percent). In other words, marriage is a powerful signal of family status for same-sex couples, and the state-specific variation in marital rights provides an impediment to family status among same-sex couples.

Years ago, when I gave my first presentation regarding the 2003 data, I boldly predicted that Americans were gravitating toward a more expansive definition of family and that same-sex marriage was an inevitability. I strongly suspect that many, if not most,

members of the audience were skeptical of my predictions. More than a decade later, however, it is clear that Americans have become more open to various living arrangements and households—most notably, to same-sex couples both with and without children. There is little reason to believe that the increased openness to same-sex couples will be reversed. We are very close to the day when same-sex couples will no longer be counted out.

ENDNOTES

1. Because the pictures also showed similar physical characteristics between parents and their children, the images also strongly imply that these are not adoptive families.
2. The reduction in the length of each interview is due to a shortened inventory that we used in 2006 and 2010.
3. For a discussion of the various conceptualizations of chosen family, see Weston (1997).
4. Because so few Americans consider roommates a family, this living arrangement is not included in the latent class analyses and therefore is not taken into account in the three categories (exclusionist, moderate, and inclusionist).
5. Some percentages in Figure 2 do not add to 100 percent because of rounding. For example, 45.3 percent of Americans were exclusionists, but this number was rounded to its closest whole number (45 percent).

REFERENCES

- Democratic National Platform*. 2012. Retrieved October 10, 2013 (<http://www.democrats.org/democratic-national-platform>).
- Frankenberg, Ruth. 1993. *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Powell, Brian. 2003. *Constructing the Family Survey 2003*. Bloomington, IN: Karl F. Schuessler Institute for Social Research.
- Powell, Brian. 2006. *Constructing the Family Survey 2006*. Bloomington, IN: Karl F. Schuessler Institute for Social Research.
- Powell, Brian. 2010. *Constructing the Family Survey 2010*. Bloomington, IN: Karl F. Schuessler Institute for Social Research.
- Powell, Brian, Catherine Bolzendahl, Claudia Geist, and Lala Carr Steelman. 2010. *Counted Out: Same-Sex Relations and Americans' Definitions of Family*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Republican Party of Texas Platform*. 2012. Retrieved October 10, 2013 (<http://www.texasgop.org/about-the-party/>).
- Smith, Dorothy E. 1993. "The Standard North American Family: SNAF as an Ideological Code." *Journal of Family Issues* 14:50–65.

- Tsu, Tiffany. 2012. "Is Chick-fil-A Anti-Gay Marriage? 'Guilty as Charged,' Leader Says." *Los Angeles Times*, July 18. Retrieved October 10, 2013 (<http://articles.latimes.com/2012/jul/18/business/la-fi-mo-chick-fil-a-gay-20120718>).
- Weston, Kath. 1997. *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*. 2nd ed. New York: Columbia University Press.