

- + • ***'I Would Like to, but My World Wouldn't End if I Didn't':*** Marital Attitudes and Aspirations among Unmarried Young Adults in the LGBTQ Community

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Marital Attitudes and Aspirations

- Although the average age at first marriage continues to increase, most young adults still report wanting to get married someday (Gassanov et al. 2008; Manning et al. 2019; Willoughby 2014; Willoughby and Carroll 2015)
 - In 2010, 69% of those 18-29 (Taylor 2010)
- Most young adults also report that getting married is important to them
 - In 2009, 8 in 10 (Scott et al. 2009)
- Research suggests that marital aspirations do vary by sex/gender, race/ethnicity, family background, and parental status (Gassanov et al. 2008; Crisey 2005; Willoughby et al. 2015)

Research Question

- Despite such sociodemographic variation, research has yet to take sexuality into account – a significant oversight given *Obergefell v. Hodges* in 2015
 - Samples thus far have been comprised primarily or exclusively of heterosexual young adults

To what extent do sexual minority young adults report wanting to get married? And what reasons do they give for wanting to get married, or not?



Data & Methods

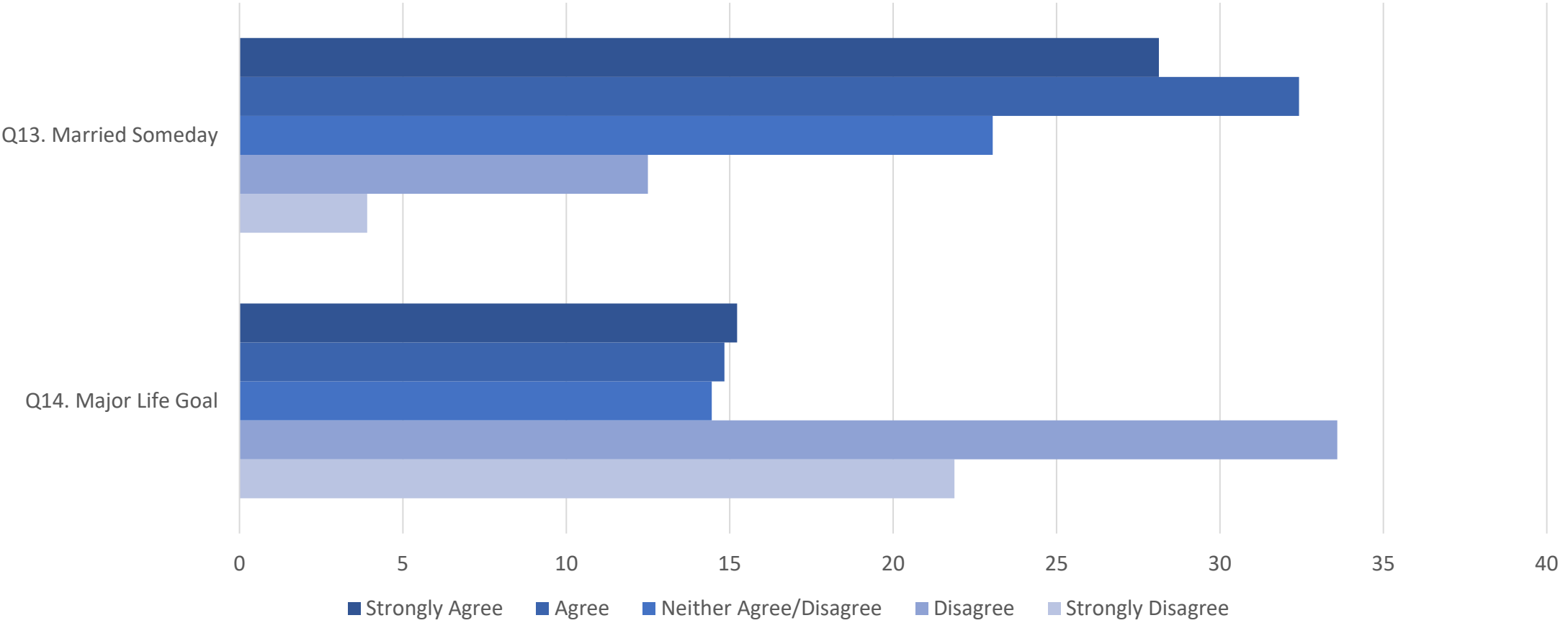
- Survey administered via Qualtrics from February to April 2021
 - 94 questions total – 86 closed-ended, 8 open-ended
- Convenience sample of 257 non-heterosexual young adults between 18 and 35 years old
 - Recruited primarily through social media (e.g., Twitter, Facebook)
 - Option to enter a random drawing for one of 21 \$50 Amazon gift cards
- Sample demographics –
 - *Sexual identity* – 31% gay/lesbian, 44% bisexual, 35% prefer to self-describe
 - *Sex* – 58% female, 22% male, 14% non-binary, 6% prefer to self-describe
 - *Gender identity* – 81% cisgender, 19% transgender

Data & Methods, Cont.

- Qualitative data drawn primarily from two open-ended questions –
 - *Q32. “If you want to get married someday, why? If you don’t want to get married someday, why not? Please be as specific as possible.”*
 - *Q33. “Overall, how important is getting married, or not getting married, to you? And why?”*
- Thematic analysis using grounded theory techniques
 - Open coding, followed by analytic memo-writing, then focused coding, and finally, another round of memo-writing



Percent Reporting Desire to Marry & Marriage as a Major Life Goal, Unmarried LGBTQ People, 18-35 (n=257)



Reasons *for* Marriage: Companionship & Commitment

Companionship –

- *I would like to get married someday, because I think it would be nice to have a life partner who I love romantically and as a person. Someone to share life with, have fun, travel, support each other, maybe have children if desired and able.*
(Bisexual, Female, Cisgender, Black/African American, 23)

Commitment –

- *I want to engage in a lifelong commitment with my partner. Although I recognize that marriage is not the only way to do that, for me personally, it is an important symbol of our commitment to one another.* (Lesbian, Female, Cisgender, White, 25)

Reasons *for* Marriage: Other Reasons

Wedding Ceremony –

- *I want the big party, with family and friends, to celebrate how much I love my partner. I won't get married because I'm expected to, but because I think it's a fun step in my relationship. I love romantic gestures, and that's what a wedding feels like to me.* (Queer, Female, Cisgender, White, 24)

Legal Benefits –

- *On a less romantic note, the tax benefits would be great, as would knowing that my partner would have full access to my personal, legal matters, finances, etc., should anything ever happen to me.* (Gay/Lesbian, Non-Binary, Transgender, White, 24)

Children –

- *I would like to have children, and I think marriage makes things simpler with kids.* (Bisexual, Female, Cisgender, White, 33, Agree)

Reasons *for* Marriage: *Qualifications*

- **Not Necessary –**

- *I value relationships and am interested in the prospect of a long-term partnership with someone. If that results in marriage, I would love that. However, I don't consider it to be an absolute necessity to have a healthy, happy, and growth-promoting relationship (Queer, Female, Cisgender, Black/Latinx, 27, Strongly Agree)*

- **Questioning Societal Pressure –**

- *I do want to get married, but I feel as if the only current driving force for marriage in my life is due to societal pressure. Other than loving another individual, there is no apparent reason for marriage. However, society has this perception of the American dream that incorporates marriage and the raising of a family (Bisexual, Female, Cisgender, White, 19, Agree)*

Reasons *against* Marriage: Unnecessary & Heteronormative

Unnecessary –

- *I'm not interested in marriage. I think commitment and a ceremony can happen outside of marriage, and weddings seem like a waste of money. Marriage to me just isn't necessary.* (Bisexual, Non-Binary/Third Gender, Transgender, White, 26)

Heteronormative –

- *I never thought marriage was something that I could have as a lesbian, so I have this strong association with marriage and heterosexual couples.* (Lesbian, Female, Cisgender, White, 31)

Reasons *against* Marriage: Prior Experiences

Previously Married –

- *I've been married before, and things soured, and it was a nightmare to disentangle myself from everything legally. I feel like I can find the type and amount of entanglement I want (emotionally, financially, legally) outside out marriage now.* (Bisexual, Genderqueer Woman, Cisgender, White, 34)

Witness to Bad Marriages/Divorces –

- *I don't want to marry...Every marriage in my family, including extended family, has ended in divorce, including multiple (dad divorced twice, stepdad on his third wife, etc.), and I just don't see it as an important thing. In fact, it's left me bitter and cynical about the whole idea of marriage as this everlasting commitment, until death do us part, etc.* (Bisexual, Female, Cisgender, White, 30)

Conclusions

- In general, the sexual minority young adults in this study *do* report wanting to get married someday
 - 60% compared to 69% reported in a general population survey (Taylor 2010)
- However, respondents *do not* generally attach much importance to marriage
 - Only 30% compared to 80% in a general population survey (Scott et al. 2009)
 - Even among those who reporting wanting to marry, qualifications were common – marriage may be unnecessary, and the desire to marry may reflect normative pressure from various social forces

Thank you!!

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