Queer Inclusion in the United Methodist Church

Amanda Udis-Kessler

Queer Inclusion in the United Methodist Church

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Preface

As social institutions go, religion may be the one that contributes both the greatest good and the greatest harm to the world. At its best, religion provides community, meaning and support to people in times of celebration and trouble, and it offers people a means of ordering their lives. Religious values and beliefs can enable people to take risks on behalf of healing the world, and can even provide the impetus for wanting to heal the world in the first place. In short, religion can be a source of great abundance, both for individuals and society. At its worst, however, religion can create insular communities that shut people out. Religion can be built on meaning systems that devalue some people, whether heathens or homosexuals, leading to dehumanization and violence. The support that religion offers can require problematic levels of commitment that force practitioners to choose between the religious organization and the "outside world." In enabling people to order their lives, religion can mandate that believers set aside reason and reflection on their own experiences in making value judgments and choosing courses of action. Religious values and beliefs can lead people to hate and kill each other, and to be willing to destroy the world. In short, religion can be a source of great injury, both for individuals and society.

The struggle of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered ("LGBT") United Methodists for full inclusion in the United Methodist Church partakes of both the gifts and the damages of religion, and in a book that focuses substantially on the damages I want to make sure to acknowledge my recognition of the gifts. The religious beliefs and spiritual practices of the LGBT United Methodists and their supporters clearly nourished them and enriched their lives, just as these beliefs and practices did for the other United Methodists I studied. To ignore the value of the church for United Methodists across the homosexuality struggle would be to deny the empirical evidence on which sociologists must depend. Nonetheless, given the topic of this book my stance must of necessity be critical, and my focus must remain on where the church (in my estimation) has fallen short of the best that it could do.

The experiences and work of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, were centered in the idea that God's grace is sufficient, even given the fallen

nature of humanity. In encountering the graciousness of United Methodists over the course of my research, I have had to think hard about how ungracious it is to write a book criticizing a denomination for fostering social inequality. At the same time, one writes a book such as this at least in part to help the denomination and others like it think about the sexuality struggle in new ways. What a researcher develops as an offering to academia may simultaneously be for the religious progressive a human manifestation of the "yet more light" the Holy continues to share with the world, audacious as such a claim may be. As a researcher, I offer this book to sociologists interested in how inequality can work in religious institutions. As a religious progressive, I hope this book can serve the United Methodist Church productively in some way. I remain convinced that, however powerful social patterns may be, there are possibilities for a different future that are yet unseen. May we find our way to them soon.

CLARIFYING NOTES

About the title: The term "queer" in the title of this book is intended to serve as shorthand for "LGBT," or "lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgendered." It should be noted that the LGBT United Methodists I studied do not call themselves queer, and they eschew "queer politics." Neither they nor I are engaged in the development of queer theory. Because it is important to describe people using language with which they feel comfortable, the remainder of the book uses "LGBT," "lesbian," "gay," or "bisexual" as appropriate. I apologize to any LGBT Christians and their allies who find the term "queer" offensive.

About biblical references: I have used the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible for all biblical quotes.

About terminology: This book focuses entirely on the United Methodist sexuality inclusion struggle as it is occurring in the United States of America, and some of the book's language reflects this limitation. I abbreviate "United States of America" to "United States," and frequently use the terms "America," "American," and "Americans" to refer to the United States of America, its citizens, and its culture. Where necessary, I refer to North America, South America, or Latin America.

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A number of people granted me permission to use their (or their organization's) materials without charge. For this, my gratitude to Rev. Carol Carter, Rev. Sharon Delgado, Rev. Dr. Bruce Hilton, Rev. Dr. Alan Jones, Rev. Philip Lawson, Rev. Charles Lerrigo, Rev. James Lockwood-Stewart, Eric Nielsen at The Gallup Organization, Barbara Porter in the Abingdon Press Permissions Office, Bruce Robinson of ReligiousTolerance.org, Rev. Judith Stone, Dr. Jamie B. Stroud, Rev. Margo Tenold, and Rev. Dr. James R. Wood. Thanks also to Rev. Donald Fado for helping me track down several ministers in order to request permission to quote them.

As difficult as it was to write this book while holding down a full-time college administrator job, my supervisor, Dr. Randy Stiles, was endlessly supportive, and one of my project supervisors, Dr. Libby Rittenberg, was helpfully encouraging.

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Gail Murphy-Geiss and Dr. Bryant "Tip" Ragan read through most of the manuscript and critiqued it at length. Dr. Phoebe Lostroh read every word of every chapter, multiple times in most cases. I have taken almost all of their advice. Any remaining errors and weaknesses in the text at this point are my doing (but hopefully not my undoing).

Dr. Nancy Naples suggested important improvements at the beginning of the writing process. Editor Benjamin Holtzman has been patient and exceedingly helpful.

Thanks, of course, to my parents, Pam Udis-Kessler, Robert Kessler, and Janet Lincoln for their support.

Finally, two dedications: this book is for Dr. Eve Spangler, who has believed in me for almost 20 years and without whom this book would not exist. The book is also for Phoebe Lostroh, for the first ten years and all the rest to come, for doing those extra chores while I wrote, and for constantly pushing me to think more carefully and write more clearly. Truly, I am blessed.

1 Introduction

I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.
(Matthew 10: 34)

MAY 11, 2000

It's the second-to-last day of the United Methodist Church's ("UMC") 2000 denominational meeting, the General Conference. Delegates to this gathering have just voted to retain language characterizing homosexuality as "incompatible with Christian teaching" in the *Book of Discipline*, the denomination's compilation of policies and doctrines. I watch, heartbroken, along with dozens of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered ("LGBT") United Methodists ("UMs")[1] and their supporters as the delegates prepare to vote on several other measures that restrict LGBT UMs in the life of the church. Suddenly, the work of General Conference is shut down as a multitude of LGBT UMs and their allies enter the delegate area to protest the "incompatibility" vote. They wear clergy stoles provided by pastors who had to give up their ministries in order to live openly as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. The protesters are also clad in buttons, stickers, and other paraphernalia traditionally found at a Gay Pride festival, and many wear crosses with rainbows painted on them, signaling their identity as LGBT Christians. This is their second day of protest; almost 200 of them were arrested the day before, along with a UMC bishop.

Before the end of the day, the protesters will have been removed and 27 of them (including two UMC bishops) arrested, and the denomination will have voted to maintain its stance on homosexuality by a two-to-one margin. In addition to the incompatibility language, the United Methodist Church will have once again prohibited lesbians and gay men who will not commit to celibacy from being pastors. UMC pastors will have once again been forbidden to perform same-sex commitment ceremonies ("holy unions"), and UMC churches will have been forbidden to host them. The denomination will have once again been forbidden to fund any program or organization "supporting" homosexuality. The overall outcome will be

considered a victory for the conservative and evangelical elements of the UMC[2], and interpreted as continued inequality within the church among the "inclusionists."[3]

General Conference 2000, particularly the restrictive votes and the inclusionist protest, is a good place to begin the story of the UMC LGBT inclusion struggle[4] because this moment in UM time captures the nature of the conflict exceptionally well. The year 2000 was the culmination of a 28-year period during which the inclusionists were consistently outvoted on the "incompatibility language" (which was first added in 1972) and the homosexuality-related prohibitions (the first of which was added in 1976).[5] The two-to-one margin in 2000 could mean that most UMs did not approve of homosexuality, that evangelical groups were more successful in getting delegates elected, or that other factors were in play. One might wonder, though, why a denomination generally committed to social justice appeared not to sustain that commitment when it came to LGBT people in their own church. Inclusionists, in turn, chose to protest because they understood protests as a natural and appropriate response to inequality. Indeed, inclusionists had protested to some degree at every General Conference since at least 1988, though 2000 marked the first time related to homosexuality that such protesters were arrested and removed from the plenary floor.[6] However, as inclusionists both told me and demonstrated by their actions, their day-to-day lives as UMs were not focused on protest and politics, but rather on mundane church activities and on their walk with Christ. One might wonder, then, why inclusionists perceived General Conference as in need of a protest that would shut it down, albeit temporarily; one might also wonder about the effects of their protest on the rest of the church. The logic behind the votes and the protest, their relation to each other, and their impact on those invested in the struggle (evangelicals, inclusionists, the "Methodist middle")[7] are the subject of this book.

MEANING, POWER, AND INEQUALITY IN MAINLINE CHRISTIANITY

The question of how mainline Christian denominations such as the UMC should respond to their LGBT members has received a great deal of attention recently. The issue of LGBT inclusion has been characterized as "the most divisive element facing the Church today," the most volatile issue facing mainline denominations, and "the fault line in American Christianity."[8] Every mainline denomination has been dealing with the subject since the 1970s, as have denominations outside the mainline, all four branches of U.S. Judaism, and other world religions.[9] Denominational struggles over homosexuality have been intractable and frustrating for those seeking inclusion, those resisting it, and the large majority of Christians "in the

middle" who generally support gay rights but who do not find homosexuality morally acceptable. At the time of this writing, the Episcopal Church in the United States is in deep tension with the worldwide Anglican Communion as a result of the Episcopal Church's unwillingness to cease performing holy unions or to guarantee categorically that no more lesbian or gay bishops will be consecrated. Studying the United Methodist struggle may thus be valuable simply because the UMC is among the denominations that have felt the need to ask, "Will homosexuality split the church?"[10]

Beyond the UMC conflict's import for church members, a case can be made that any church struggle involving votes and protests should have some valuable insights for the study of social inequality. Christianity is an extremely powerful social institution, for better and for worse, and because it trades so heavily in meaning and symbols, it can be a high-stakes locus for reproducing or transforming any kind of inequality based on social devaluation; this may be particularly true for LGBT inequality. For example, people who attend church frequently demonstrate more antigay prejudice than those who do not attend church frequently, and even people involved in LGBT-tolerant religions show more antigay prejudice than those with no religious preference.[11] Correlation is not causation, but it does suggest some kind of relationship between Christianity and antigay prejudice. My research suggests that religiously conservative Christians object to the church supporting civil rights for LGBT people even in the public sphere, while they work diligently to keep prohibitions that can be interpreted as antigay in place within the church.

Even those in the "Christian middle," who support civil rights for LGBT people in the public sphere, often treat the church quite differently. U.S. polls suggest that people who would be completely comfortable with a gay man selling furniture, performing surgery, and even serving in the military are unwilling to belong to a denomination that would ordain the same gay man as a pastor. Similarly, some people who believe that a lesbian couple is entitled to legal protection of their rights as a family unit would leave their congregation if its pastor blessed the same couple's holy union in church.[12] While the commitment of such people to equality in the public sphere is laudable, it is somewhat inconsistent that such commitment should not extend into all social institutions, including religion. Studying the UMC conflict can help explain why LGBT equality is more likely to be stymied within Christianity than within other, non-religious, contexts.[13]

It is also important, however, to acknowledge and understand when and where Christianity is a source for transformation in the direction of equality. What does religion look like for inclusionists, both LGBT and heterosexual? Here, too, the study of a mainline denomination's sexuality struggle can help explain the differences between Christians who reproduce LGBT inequality on all fronts, those who support equality in civil society but not in the church, and those who work to make the church fully inclusive.

This study takes seriously the connection between religion's role in helping people make sense of the world, on the one hand, and religion's homophobia and heterosexism on the other. My approach follows that of Sered (1997, 1999) in linking the symbolization of a group to its disenfranchisement. By applying mechanisms of devaluation normally associated with other kinds of inequality (racism, sexism, class inequality) to homophobia and heterosexism, and by demonstrating how these mechanisms work in a religious context, I seek to show that the United Methodist Church reproduces homophobia and heterosexism institutionally regardless of whether that is its intention. The issue of intentionality is important because evangelical and conservative UMs routinely claim that they don't mean anyone ill, and that they are not "unkind" or "stony-hearted" as inclusionists sometimes characterize them. They profess simply to be committed to religious values that do not allow them to accept homosexuality.[14] Without entirely rejecting their claim, I situate it in a larger context of cultural values and institutional priorities that renders intentionality unnecessary for social inequality to flourish in the church.

The "United Methodist Church" is, of course, more than the delegates who vote on what to leave in or remove from the *Book of Discipline*, and more than the congregations filled with people who might accept a lesbian realtor but not necessarily a lesbian pastor. The denomination also includes the inclusionists, those clergy and laity who consider themselves "the loyal opposition"[15] when it comes to the sexuality-related prohibitions. The inclusionists clearly intend to transform the church in the direction of LGBT equality. However, the question can be raised, even in their case, as to whether actions such as the General Conference 2000 protest truly aid them in their cause. My findings suggest the controversial possibility that protesting may have a complex set of consequences for the inclusionists, not all of them positive.

Finally, the UMC sexuality struggle should be of interest to those concerned with LGBT equality more generally because of just how "American" United Methodism is, and because of just how Methodist the United States has been in the past. The extent to which U.S. Methodism and American culture have historically informed each other suggests that the UM sexuality struggle may provide insights about the possibilities and challenges facing LGBT people and their allies in society more broadly.

PREVIOUS STUDIES OF THE UNITED METHODIST LGBT INCLUSION CONFLICT

While a number of researchers have studied the UMC inclusion struggle, most have been interested either in documenting inequality or in theory development, but not in both to an equal degree.[16] Comstock's (1996) study of lesbian/gay/bisexual people in the United Church of Christ and the UMC

represents a good example of research that focuses on recording experiences of sexuality-based inequality without separately generating new theory. Comstock studied religious belonging, switching, leaving, and "religion shopping;" service, participation, leadership, and advocacy in church; experiences with seminary, ordination, ministry, and employment; beliefs and theology; available support and community; and evaluations, feelings, reasons, and challenges related to staying in the church. He found substantial structural and cultural inequality in most of these areas. In terms of feelings associated with being an LGBT United Methodist, 50 percent of respondents reported feeling angry, 46 percent reported feeling discouraged, 44 percent reported feeling marginalized, 41 percent reported feeling sad, and 26 percent reported feeling unwelcome (ibid., 204–205). Most UM respondents did not feel good about their affiliation with the denomination, and "reported that they remained affiliated with their denomination because they are committed to changing their denomination" (ibid., 229), particularly with regard to the homosexuality-related prohibitions. Others stayed because they had found supportive local congregations or because they protected themselves by maintaining only a "tangential" relationship with the denomination. Still others stayed, simply, because United Methodism was home for them (ibid., 228–229).[17]

Several studies of the UMC sexuality struggle that focus on theory development incorporate the inclusionist experience of inequality to some degree, such as Stephens' (1997) application of various conflict resolution theories to the struggle. Similarly, Oliveto (2002) studied the processes by which important organizations on both sides of the struggle came into existence, determining that congregations were a particularly important locus of social change because they served as a meeting place for "private" and "public" concerns. One early study (Wood and Bloch 1995) examined the conflict but took a substantially different tack, finding evidence that General Conference 1992 served as a model of civility and Habermasian communication.

One study (Moon 2000, 2004) stands out in combining theory development and a focus on inequality within the church. Moon used participant observation and interviewing to study two UM congregations, one in Chicago and one in a nearby rural area, in order to learn how members of these congregations made sense of homosexuality and denominational struggles around it. The urban church, which prided itself on being inclusive, had experienced turmoil over the issue. The rural church had few inclusion-minded members, and had several members involved with ministries designed to transform homosexuals into heterosexuals. While Moon interviewed some lesbian and gay church members, her focus was on "normals," those she described as "unmarked," and she sought to show "how [such] people reproduce the silent authority of normative sexuality as they seek in their daily lives to discern between right and wrong, godly and sinful, loving and unloving" (2000: 15–16).

Moon found that her respondents defined church and politics as opposites (2000: 18; see also Moon 2004). They appeared to construct marriage and the church as unmarked "zones of innocence" standing not just apart from, but in contrast to, issues of politics, inequality, and sex. These latter three "zones" were understood as material realities from which one escaped in church through spiritual transcendence. Just as the home has been described as a "haven in a heartless world," the church was a haven from the secular world for Moon's respondents.

While Moon studied the inclusion conflict at the congregational level and I studied it at the denominational level, our findings are similar on several fronts. First, Moon (2000) found that church members shifted among discourses of Scripture, tradition, science, experience, and democratic ideals in their reasoning about homosexuality; I observed identical discourses at play in published literature, during interviews, and throughout my fieldwork at General Conference 2000. Second, we both found a tension between "the church" and "the world" that substantially informs how those opposed to full LGBT inclusion make sense of the struggle. Finally, we both concluded that this "church"-"world" tension creates a dilemma for the inclusionists, though we understand the dilemma in slightly different ways. Moon (2004) notes the improbability that "gay pain in church" will win congregations over to full inclusion, while I argue in this book that the political analysis adopted by the inclusionists, however reasonable, is similarly unlikely to lead to the end of denominational inequality.

THE PLAN OF THIS BOOK

The 2000 General Conference votes and protest do not exist in a historical or cultural vacuum. In order to make sense of these activities, it is necessary to understand the ideas that informed them, the events that led up to them, and the people that took part in them. I provide this background in Chapter Two, introducing the United Methodist Church, the contemporary Western LGBT identity, and the story of the UMC sexuality struggle. The chapter begins with a short history of the United Methodist Church's development, a description of its current structure, and consideration of the "American-ness" of United Methodism. Highlights of recent LGBT history are then presented. A detailed account of the homosexuality struggle within the denomination follows, concluding with a description of selected LGBT-related outcomes of General Conference 2000.

The United Methodist Church is only one of many denominations and religious organizations in conflict over homosexuality. Understanding how its experiences are similar to, or different from, those of other U.S. mainline Christian denominations can further deepen our understanding of Christianity's role in reproducing and transforming homophobia and heterosexism. Sociologically speaking, the two mainline denominations that

are most useful as comparison groups are the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), or PCUSA, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Both denominations have undergone variants of the sexuality struggle that are remarkably similar to that of the UMC, yet each denomination's experience with the struggle differs in instructive ways. In addition, while the Episcopal Church may be more accurately characterized as a liberal Christian denomination, its experience with sexuality conflicts is worth comparing to the UMC for two reasons. First, both denominational structures include bishops as spiritual leaders; this is not the case for the PCUSA. Second, the "global church" beyond the United States (the Anglican Communion for the Episcopal Church; African, Asian and Latin American "central conferences" for the UMC) has an impact on the sexuality struggle not found in the PCUSA or the ELCA, both of which are located exclusively in the United States. Chapter Two ends with a comparison of all four denominations on key elements of the struggle.

To best understand the perspectives of those deeply involved in the UMC struggle, I used qualitative methods to collect and analyze data, combining fieldwork, in-depth interviewing, and extensive review of published materials. Chapter Three addresses the study's methodology. In addition to discussing research practices and assumptions, I consider the extent to which the study can productively be thought of as an "autoethnography," that is, a case of a social researcher studying her own experiences during the research process. Autoethnography has been the subject of increasing attention and controversy over the past ten years as qualitative researchers assess its value. My experiences during the research described here do play a substantial role in the analyses and conclusions of this book, and I approached the topic as an interested party from start to finish. At the same time, I would characterize the study's methodology as falling between traditional social science research and full-fledged autoethnography rather than as an autoethnography per se.

In order to make the fieldwork experience more vivid, and to provide a deeper sense of the stakes for those on both sides of the struggle, I recreate selected field notes from the ethnographic component of the research in Chapter Four. I chose material that would capture some of what General Conference 2000 delegates, non-delegate evangelicals, and non-delegate inclusionists experienced, and that would document the reasoning used by both sides to try to convince any delegates in the "movable middle" to vote with their side. Because the emotional experiences of the inclusionists play an important role in their perspectives and actions, I have chosen to include fieldwork moments that show clearly how angry and pained the inclusionists were.[18] Finally, a disproportionate amount of Chapter Four is devoted to the first homosexuality-related discussion of the committee that handled most of the relevant petitions. Virtually all of the key inclusionist and evangelical themes arose in this meeting, and reporting most of the verbal exchanges provides a good sense of the strenuous and exhausting work

done by the delegates while suggesting the tension experienced by those of us viewing the meeting.

Chapters Five through Eight describe and assess four analytic approaches to the UMC inclusion struggle (culture wars, mechanisms of homophobia/heterosexism, closure theory, and contradictory institutional logics). These analytic chapters draw on evidence from fieldwork, interviews, web pages, books, and other sources that demonstrate how those on both sides of the issue articulate their positions. Each side uses a variety of discourses, both in terms of their values and what they would have the denomination do on the sexuality issue.

The inclusionists focus on ending exclusion, becoming "first-class citizens," overcoming discrimination, and obtaining justice. In some cases, these goals are stated explicitly; in other cases, they may be assumed from discussions about exclusion, second-class citizenship, discrimination, and injustice. Inclusionists rely extensively on their experiences. When they bring religious justifications into their claims, they keep "political" appeals close at hand, frequently interweaving Jesus and justice. They also appeal to Jesus as demonstrating God's all-inclusive love, particularly for outcasts, while highlighting Jesus' prioritizing of love over law. Finally, they envision revelation as present in Scripture but continuing past the writing of the Bible, even up to the present day. The inclusionists ultimately challenge what they see as exclusionary and homophobic rulings in order to eliminate the sexuality-related boundaries in the church. They strive to enable every United Methodist to attain full inclusion in the UMC without regard to his or her gender or sexual identity (Sample and DeLong 2000).

In contrast, the conservatives focus on maintaining what they call "classical Christianity." They appeal to Scripture as authoritative, to tradition, to holiness, and to denominational identity, and they appear to have a sociologically sophisticated comprehension of the need for boundaries in the life of the church. Conservatives are much less likely than inclusionists to bring Jesus into their arguments, and much more likely to talk about the church as an institution. They explicitly reject the inclusionists' claims, both theologically and politically. The conservatives ultimately seek to reinforce sexuality-related boundaries in the church. They strive to ensure that the current restrictive policies are upheld in the name of Scriptural and doctrinal standards and integrity (Heidinger 2000).

Each side's position can be interpreted using a number of different theoretical perspectives. The first of these perspectives considered, culture wars, is the topic of Chapter Five. The phrase "culture wars" is familiar to many people from Hunter's (1991) book introducing the concept, and because the Religious Right took up the phrase soon after the book's publication.[19] Hunter claims that cultural conflicts are best understood as a matter of competing systems of moral authority, "the basis by which people determine whether something is good or bad, right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable." For Hunter, these "competing moral visions" are best

understood as "polarizing impulses or tendencies" toward what he calls orthodoxy and progressivism. Orthodoxy, according to Hunter, involves "commitment on the part of adherents to an eternal, definable, and transcendent authority," while for progressives, "truth tends to be viewed as a process, a reality that is ever unfolding." Hunter claims that the orthodox approach contains "certain non-negotiable moral 'truths,'" while progressives tend "to resymbolize historic faiths according to the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life." Moreover, "all progressivists maintain to a certain degree that the language and programmatic thrust of traditional faith . . . is no longer relevant for modern times."

While Hunter focused on cultural struggles in the public sphere (gay rights, abortion, public education, the arts), his underlying concepts apply well to the UMC sexuality struggle. Extensive evidence shows that the evangelicals and conservatives approach the issue from what Hunter would call an "orthodox" stance, while inclusionists consistently demonstrate their commitment to "progressivism." Indeed, comments from those on both sides suggest that they find the culture wars approach plausible in making sense of the conflict. Stephens (1997) and Oliveto (2002) both note the relevance of a culture wars analysis to the UMC sexuality struggle as well.

For all its value, a culture wars approach has certain limitations; among them is the fact that it does not adequately explain the inclusionist response to their situation. Why bring a denominational gathering to a halt if one's opponent is merely guilty of a different type of moral commitment (even if that difference does foster conflict)? What fuels the depth of inclusionist pain and anger? Here, an analysis that takes seriously the inclusionists' experience of sexuality-based inequality is needed. Chapter Six provides such an analysis. In it, I take heterosexism to be a social system based on the assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual, resulting in the exclusion of the experiences and concerns of non-heterosexual people. Because heterosexism assigns "sexual normalcy and moral legitimacy" only to heterosexuality (Ellison 1993: 155), homosexuality and bisexuality tend to be both invisible and stigmatized. Homophobia in turn describes the social devaluing and disadvantaging of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals through personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional means.[20]

While inclusionists adopt definitions of heterosexism and homophobia similar to mine, evangelicals and conservatives strenuously reject the claim that the sexuality-based restrictions should be understood as parallel to racism (for example).[21] In order to make the case that homophobia and heterosexism can be productively compared to racism, sexism, and class inequality, I take several sociological concepts and claims that have been used to elucidate those forms of inequality and apply them to homophobia and heterosexism. In doing so, I hope to show that both terms can be used descriptively and analytically, and need not be understood as epithets aimed at conservatives with whom one disagrees.

Sociologists who study inequality and social stigma have developed the concept of a "master status," the (devalued) status that overrides all of one's other attributes. A good example of race as a master status can be found in Ken Burns' PBS documentary on World War II, in which shipbuilders desperately needed in Mobile, Alabama, were prevented by a racist mob from welding metal because they were African American. LGBT people have often found that their sexuality, unless carefully concealed, can become a master status, rendering them unfit parents, soldiers, clergy, and spouses (among other statuses) in the eyes of society. The sexuality-based master status of LGBT UMs renders them suspect Christians and defines them as extremists, removing them from the "Methodist middle" no matter how moderate their values or daily lives may be.

Another sociological concept, "moral alchemy," was developed by Robert Merton (1949) to describe one aspect of how racism works: that which is approved of when associated with a socially valued group becomes magically transmuted into a problem when associated with a devalued group. A classic example is the strong-willed boss at work, who is appreciated as a "good leader" if male and castigated as a "bitch" if female. While examples of moral alchemy can be found for all out-groups, they abound for LGBT people. Homosexuality, after all, is a "lifestyle" while heterosexuality is simply "life." Moral alchemy is particularly important as a mechanism by which the church maintains sexuality-based inequality because the religiosity and spirituality genuinely experienced by LGBT UMs can be easily written off; clearly, if they were "truly Christian," they would know that homosexuality is wrong and would give it up.

A recent analysis of sexism in religion (Sered 1997, 1999) developed the concept of "Woman" as symbol, showing how women's symbolization in religion limited their ability to act as moral agents in control of their own lives. While the symbolization of "Woman" may or may not have originated out of a desire to limit women's religious opportunities, it has the effect of restricting women's access to religious authority. Here, LGBT UMs can symbolize a number of things, from "the world" (as opposed to "the church") to chaos (as opposed to order); the inclusionists face an important dilemma in the extent to which they symbolize politics to other UMs. Just as the women Sered studied struggled to move from being symbols to being agents, the LGBT UMs I studied try desperately to get out from under their own symbolization, working tirelessly to be seen as people rather than as an issue. However, the methods used by inclusionists to become agents instead of symbols may serve in part to reproduce rather than transform their situation.

Not only do these various mechanisms of inequality work together in the case of homophobia and heterosexism, they are compounded by an "ick factor" that does not appear in United Methodist responses to "sins" other than homosexuality (bearing false witness, stealing, failing to honor one's parents, to name just three commandments). Chapter Six unpacks these

various components of homophobia and heterosexism, providing examples of how they are at work in the UMC inclusion struggle.

Chapter Seven takes up the analysis developed by inclusionists in response to their experiences in the denomination. The discourse on which they rely is overwhelmingly political, driven by their definition of the problem as homophobia and heterosexism rather than the immorality of homosexuality.[22] Moreover, their interpretation of the situation informs their conclusion that the solution must be political as well. Clearly, the best political outcome would have been if General Conference overturned the LGBT clergy prohibition, the prohibition on funding programs or organizations that "support" homosexuality, and the restriction on holy unions, as well as eliminating from the *Book of Discipline* the assertion that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching." However, after 28 years without change (at the time of my fieldwork), inclusionists increasingly felt the need to turn to other kinds of politics to be heard.

One component of the inclusionist analysis is the perception that the conservatives are trying to get rid of inclusionists in order to take over the denomination. This perception suggests that inclusionists have developed what sociologists call a "social closure" analysis, even if that language is unknown to LGBT UMs and their allies. The term "social closure," derived from certain comments of Max Weber (e.g., 1968: 341–343), describes a process in which one group monopolizes advantages by closing off opportunities to another group defined as outsiders, by definition inferior and inadequate. While Weber's description focused on class inequality, social closure is also applicable to status groups; it has been used to describe racial ghettos, for example (e.g., Murphy 1988: 8–9; Stone 1995: 397–399). Inclusionist strategy appears to be based in part on a perception that conservatives are trying to push them out of the church, resulting in an inclusionist commitment to fight as hard as necessary to remain in the denomination.

In Chapter Eight, I return to the question of the relationship between "the church" and "the world" from the perspective of conservatives and evangelicals (and, to a lesser degree, of moderates). How do other UMs respond to inclusionist analyses and actions? My research suggested that United Methodist moderates find the conservatives less problematic than the inclusionists; if so, why should this be the case?[23] Having considered culture and social structure in previous chapters, I draw them together here by bringing institutional theory into the picture.

Neo-institutional theorists Roger Friedland and Robert Alford (1991) have developed the concept of "contradictory institutional logics" to explain conflicts that take place within and between institutions.[24] Friedland and Alford claim that the "capitalist market, bureaucratic state, [democratic process], nuclear family, and Christian religion" play important roles in "shap[ing] individual preferences and organizational interests" as society-wide institutions. They propose further that each of these institutions

has "a central logic—a set of material practices and symbolic constructions—which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate." They identify these five institutions as "potentially contradictory" and as "mak[ing] multiple logics available to individuals and organizations." For Friedland and Alford institutional conflict is best understood as a struggle "over the appropriate relationships between institutions, and by which institutional logic different activities should be regulated and to which categories of persons they apply." I argue in Chapter Eight that both the inclusionist approach and the denominational response to this approach are productively understood as an example of contradictory institutional logics at work, with the two logics in question being democracy and Christian religion. Such an analysis explains United Methodist resistance to the inclusionist agenda, and sheds surprising light on the extent to which the situation is infused with social inequality. Chapter Eight closes by considering the connections between culture wars, homophobia and heterosexism, social closure and contradictory institutional logics, demonstrating that these processes work in concert, and not simply separately, to reproduce inequality in the United Methodist Church.

The final chapter, "Implications and Possibilities," addresses broader implications of the study and suggests potential directions in which the UMC struggle might go. I first raise the question of how to characterize the "Protestant middle." Despite the common use of terms such as "ambivalent" and "muddled" to describe those who are not actively involved on either side of the inclusion struggle, I argue that the "middle" is better understood as having integrated both religious and democratic logics in its thinking about these issues. This claim, if accurate, goes a long way toward explaining why full LGBT inclusion is more problematic in religious institutions (including, but not limited to, the UMC) than in civil society.

Americans, it turns out, look a lot like United Methodists in their simultaneous support of equal rights for LGBT people and rejection of the idea that "homosexual behavior" is moral. I draw on national poll data that demonstrate this distinction, arguing that it can be explained by multiple institutional logics at work in the public sphere as well as by the varying extent to which different homosexuality-related topics are symbolized. At the same time, poll data show increasing support for both LGBT equal rights and homosexuality as such since the 1970s, suggesting that the power of religious logic and symbolization in the public sphere may have decreased somewhat in the last thirty years.

The chapter then considers the prospects for the UMC inclusion struggle, discusses options for the inclusionists, and closes with a final comment on the stakes of the struggle for both inclusionists and those who oppose full LGBT inclusion in the church.

Appendix One presents the outcomes of selected homosexuality-related General Conference votes from 1972 through 2004. Appendix

Two provides sample General Conference 2000 petitions on homosexuality-related issues. Appendix Three reproduces a comparison of inclusionist and conservative/evangelical views of homosexuality.

Ultimately, I seek to demonstrate in this book that the inclusion struggle in the United Methodist Church is driven by a complex set of processes in which sexuality-based inequality, deep-seated personal identities, cultural conflicts about truth and moral authority, and differing responses to the church as an institution intersect with one another. The multilayered nature of these intersections, and the high stakes they raise for those on all sides of the inclusion struggle, suggest that the struggle is highly likely to continue in the foreseeable future.

A PERSONAL NOTE

Social science research that begins with one's own perspectives and interests requires a frank and upfront acknowledgement of those perspectives and interests. My personal sympathies fall entirely with the inclusionists, and were I a United Methodist their struggle would be mine. I am a bisexual person in a committed same-sex monogamous long-term relationship (ten years as of this writing). Like many LGBT people, I have participated in protests, including civil disobedience in the case of one AIDS-related protest. I own my share of lesbian/gay paraphernalia, and during the May 11, 2000 General Conference protest, I wore a mock clergy stole in solidarity with the protesters though I remained iconographically neutral during all of the other days of General Conference. These commitments may also be inferred from the fact that I have written a book about homophobia and heterosexism in the church rather than (for example) a book commending the church's current response to the "abomination of homosexual perversion."

While not a Christian, I hope I could accurately be described as a seeker after faith. I found much that moved me in United Methodist worship but ultimately could not assent to UM doctrine. At the same time, I discovered that UMs on both sides of the LGBT inclusion issue have pastoral gifts that restored me frequently during my fieldwork, gifts for which I am grateful.

Some readers might question whether such a strong personal commitment to one side of this struggle would render a researcher unable to study it fairly. I contend that a good researcher ought to be able to understand the perspectives of those with whom she disagrees well enough to report them accurately and to present them sympathetically where appropriate. In qualitative research, the balance between reporting what others say and do on the one hand, and situating it in a larger analytic context on the other, may always be a challenge, but it is the only way someone with a personal stake in a struggle can nonetheless study both sides successfully. The reader will have to decide whether I have succeeded in doing so.

2 History and Participants

As noted in Chapter One, a certain amount of background information is necessary in order to make sense of the particular moment in the UMC homosexuality struggle that was General Conference 2000. This chapter begins by setting the historical context of the current contention, which requires an introduction to the history of the United Methodist Church, to some of its structures and procedures, and to its "American-ness." The nature of the contemporary Western LGBT identity also plays an important role in the struggle; I provide a short account of the development of this identity up to and including the beginning of the intra-denominational contention. I then turn to an account of the struggle itself from 1972 (when the first homosexuality-related language appeared in the *Book of Discipline*) through General Conference 2000. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the UMC struggle is similar to, and different from, the related conflicts within the PCUSA, the ELCA, and the Episcopal Church.

THE ORIGINS OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Methodism came into existence as a result of John Wesley's conversion experience at the age of 34, on May 24, 1738. Wesley, an Anglican priest in Oxford, England, had been a troubled and somewhat self-destructive missionary; following his conversion, he became a vibrant preacher and a passionate evangelist.[1]

In 1729, John's younger brother Charles had developed a student club at Christ Church, where he was an undergraduate. The goal of the club members was "to deepen their own faith and serve others."[2] Focused as they were on the methods and disciplines of spirituality and holiness as they understood these, it is perhaps not surprising that they were disparagingly called "Methodists" by less religiously inclined students; it is less known that they were also called "Bible Moths," "Sacramentarians," and "the Holy Club." John was involved in this organization and earnestly sought to live a holy and self-disciplined life, but appears to have approached faith as intellectual assent to a set of beliefs rather than as an experience of God's power.

John Wesley's circumstances changed when, in the mid-1730s, he encountered a party of Moravian Brethren. Discouraged by his own lack of religious fervor, Wesley was moved by these people who emphasized faith as complete reliance on Christ rather than as assent to a set of creeds. After several years of encounters with Brethren, Wesley began attending Moravian meetings in London, where his conversion experience occurred. He describes the experience as follows:

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death.[3]

Wesley's conversion experience revitalized him and caused him, along with some similarly moved others, to establish the first Methodist "society" in London in 1739. The timing was perfect, as an evangelical revival had started in England the previous year. Wesley joined in, his aim to "reform the nation and spread scriptural holiness over the land."[4] He evangelized tirelessly over the course of the next fifty years, developing dozens of "Methodist" groups around the United Kingdom.

Wesley was apparently a brilliant organizer as well as a passionate evangelist. In order to keep newly minted Methodists disciplined, he established several kinds of regular gatherings for them. Societies met for preaching and worship, and less frequently for "love feasts" ("special gatherings where Methodists shared bread and water, prayer, hymns, personal testimonies, and an offering for the poor"[5]). Societies were organized in circuits, or regional sets that Wesley could visit during a single, multi-month trip. Classes, subsets of the societies, allowed Methodists to assemble for Bible study, prayer, and mutual encouragement in order to better their spiritual condition. Classes ranged from as few as three people to more than 50, and were overseen by particularly experienced lay leaders. The only requirement for membership was "a desire to flee from the wrath to come and to be saved from [one's] sins,"[6] but remaining a Methodist entailed arduous spiritual work, including frequent examination by other group members. There was no room among Methodists for those Wesley called "almost Christians." Finally, in terms of organization, Wesley established "conferences" with various clergy and lay leaders in order to maintain maximum contact with, and control over, them; Wesley's conferences represent a forerunner of the church's current organizational structure.

Scriptural holiness became and remained a guiding element among the earliest Methodist societies in England. Perhaps because of his disposition, Wesley was especially attentive to Jesus' command to be perfect as God is

perfect.[7] He claimed that grace draws Christians toward "Christian perfection," which he described as "a heart 'habitually filled with the love of God and neighbor' and as 'having the mind of Christ and walking as he walked.'"[8] In Wesley's view, perfection or holiness was a practical way of life available to and necessary for all true Christians.

Like many reformers, Wesley never intended to start either a new sect or a denomination[9] but rather considered himself to be at the forefront of a renewal movement in a church gone rigid and ossified. However, his desire to bring scriptural holiness to the whole of England necessarily brought him into conflict with other clergy, particularly given that Church of England clergy had regionally specific pastoral responsibilities. At one point, a bishop chastised Wesley for preaching in the bishop's diocese, at which point Wesley is reputed to have said, "I look upon all the world as my parish." With such a perspective, it is not surprising that the Methodist movement eventually separated from the Church of England, nor that it found its way to the colonies across the Atlantic.

METHODISM IN AMERICA

> Organized as societies much of the membership of which was recruited from revival meetings; welcoming people to a warm-hearted fellowship of worship and singing; preaching the availability of grace to people of any race, class, or gender who threw themselves on God's mercy . . . Methodism was the quintessential American voluntary organization.[10]

For several years just before his 1738 conversion, John Wesley had been a Church of England missionary to the colony of Georgia. He had intended to proselytize among "Indians" in the colonies but was assigned to the settlers instead, a project that ended without success. After his conversion, John remained aware of the potential importance of the colonies as a region in which to evangelize. After Methodism had spread through England, the movement came to the colonies, not long before the revolution. Wesley urged colonial Methodists to remain loyal to the crown but he realized that a new form of the movement would need to be established after the revolution, so he ordained preachers and sent them to the colonies. Methodist classes and congregations developed in earnest in the colonies during the 1760s, and at Christmas of 1784 about 60 ministers gathered in Baltimore and organized the Methodist Episcopal Church (so named because its structure included an episcopate, or group of bishops).

Finke and Stark (1992: 56) have observed that in 1776 there were 65 Methodist churches in the colonies and 4,921 members. By 1850, in contrast, there were 13,302 congregations and over 2.6 million members, making Methodism the largest denomination in the United States at that time. Similarly, Finke and Stark (ibid., 55) report that 2.5 percent of religious adherents

in 1776 were Methodists, a proportion that reached 34.2 percent in 1850. Most analysts agree that Methodism's astounding growth had to do with its evangelizing strategies, its cultural fit with the new nation, and its genius in becoming heavily involved in revivalism as this phenomenon spread in the early 19th century. I consider each of these points briefly in turn.

Methodist evangelizing was based on Wesley's own "circuit-riding" in England, which was a brilliant move for Methodism in America. "Itinerant" (traveling) preachers rode thousands of miles a year, taking the Gospel to the people wherever they were. They preached in churches where possible; they preached in fields when necessary (which appears to have been often), and they asked only room and board. By following the population as it moved West and South, Methodists adapted to the frontier situation in ways that Eastern denominations (Congregationalists, Unitarians, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians) did not.

The Methodist emphasis on religious experience went well with nascent American individualism, and the "robust confidence" of the "untried, open, and optimistic society of the young nation" welcomed Methodism's evangelical theology, seeing in it a religious counterpart to images of manifest destiny and democratic progress.[11] Hatch (1989) notes that the early phase of American Methodism was part of a larger democratic movement in society, and claims that in essence Methodists democratized religion by giving it directly to the people. Turner (1996: 122–123) argues that Methodism also found a double elective affinity with different classes of people; its emotionalism initially appealed to laborers, and its ascetic norms appealed to successful businessmen somewhat later.

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Great Revival broke out on the Southern frontier, signaling the beginning of the Second Great Awakening that would dominate Protestantism for half a century. Methodists became heavily involved with camp meetings and revivals. For much of the first half of the century, Methodism spread as a frontier movement through revivalism, and was a religion of the poor and uneducated. Wesley's organizational brilliance had made its way across the Atlantic. Classes were developed for those who had come to Methodism through revivals. As a mid-century pastor explained, a new member "is immediately placed in one of the classes, under the care of a person of experience and discrimination. [The church] is a spiritual workshop, where persons who enter are expected to work for Christ."[12] Such was the development of Methodism through 1850 in the United States.

American Methodism changed significantly as the new nation grew up. As the frontier was settled, the missionary movement became a full-fledged denomination, less sectarian and more accommodating and "mainline." Methodists had been drawn mostly from the frontier working classes; increasingly, they were drawn, first from the urban working classes, and later from the middle class. As Methodists moved up in socioeconomic status, Methodism became less invested in tent revivalism and camp meetings, and more invested in church programs, religious education,

and organizational bureaucracy. What had been emotionally charged revivals became normalized worship as camp meeting grounds, such as Martha's Vineyard, were turned into summer resorts. Theological training became increasingly important to middle-class Methodists, who wanted the more educated clergy of the Eastern seaboard denominations; colleges and seminaries were established and the circuit riders became resident clergymen.[13]

As Methodists became the quintessentially middle-American religion between 1850 and 1950, some of the barriers separating Methodists from "almost Christians" fell. The sect-turned-denomination became lax about enforcing strict behavioral standards for members. Class meetings died out. Clergy who were trained in seminaries were exposed to increasingly broad interpretations of Christian doctrine, with the result that some Methodist clergy were no longer comfortable with traditional understandings of sin, perfectionism, and holiness. During the same period, Methodism experienced major growth and institutionalization, with membership in the Northern and Southern denominations (which had split over slavery in the 1840s) growing over 400 percent. By 1920, the Northern church had over four million members, and the Southern church, two million. Church property values increased during this period and denominational publishing exploded.

In 1939 the churches reunited, calling the new denominational entity The Methodist Church. The racial issue had not, however, been settled; indeed, the only way the Southern church would reunite was to create a segregated structure for African Americans that lasted almost 30 years. On other fronts, the denomination began ordaining women in 1956,[14] and in 1968, after some years of declining membership rates (in tandem with other mainline and liberal denominations), The Methodist Church merged with The Evangelical United Brethren Church to form the United Methodist Church (UMC).[15]

THE STRUCTURE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

The structure of the UMC is best understood as a mix of hierarchy, bureaucracy, and democracy.[16] The denominational polity is episcopal, meaning that there is a hierarchy of accountability that reaches from bishops (the episcopate) down through pastors. A conglomerate of denomination-wide boards, general agencies, committees, commissions, and councils addresses matters such as finance, religious education, and ecumenical relations through bureaucratic processes. The church's democratic elements involve the election of Annual Conference, General Conference, and Jurisdictional delegates, as well as the voting of these delegates on certain church-related matters. An elected Judicial Council, the denomination's "supreme court," interprets church law, adding yet another layer of complexity. The UMC official web page observed at one time that the

"organization of the denomination resembles that of the U.S. government. The General Conference is the top legislative body; the nine-member Judicial Council is the 'supreme court;' and the Council of Bishops is similar to the executive branch," noting that this structure allows certain "checks and balances" to be built into the system (United Methodist Church 2002).

At the individual end of the church structure is the local church, or congregation. Daily UM life is lived at this level. Denominational analysts disagree on the extent to which the practices and priorities of individual congregations are affected by the other elements of the church. Congregations are grouped into districts.

The Annual Conference, which is understood to be the basic unit of the denomination, is a somewhat complex entity. An Annual Conference refers to a geographical area (with "California-Nevada," "Northern Illinois," and "South Georgia" being some examples), to a yearly meeting of elected representatives from the area, and to the primary membership site of United Methodist clergy. At the yearly meetings, elected lay delegates worship together, elect delegates to General Conference in turn, propose General Conference legislation, and handle other regional matters. The seven Annual Conferences outside the United States are called Central Conferences; three of these are in Africa, three in Europe and one in the Philippines.

Annual Conferences are gathered into five Jurisdictions in the United States: North Central, Northeastern, South Central, Southeastern, and Western. Jurisdictional delegates meet every four years to elect new bishops and to select members of general boards and agencies. The different Jurisdictions have different religious cultures, with the Southeastern Jurisdiction the most conservative (followed by South Central) and the Western Jurisdiction the most liberal (followed by Northeastern).

As noted in Chapter One, the General Conference is a quadrennial gathering where elected delegates vote on proposals to change or retain language regarding denominational doctrine and policy. While a four-year budget is also set at General Conference, and while new members of the Judicial Council are elected there, the key task of the delegates is to revise the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions* through the adoption, modification, or rejection of petitions. The *Book of Discipline* is, as mentioned in Chapter One, the compilation of denominational policies and doctrines; the *Book of Resolutions* "is not legally binding but serves as a guide for the church for reference, encouragement, study and support."[17] Individuals, congregations, Annual Conferences, agencies, and other entities can send petitions to the General Conference; these petitions can change (weaken, strengthen, add to, delete from, or otherwise modify) current policies, explicitly move to retain current policies as they are, or delete them entirely. General Conference is run using Roberts' Rules of Order. Only the General Conference can speak officially for the United Methodist Church, and in some sense, the UMC is only gathered as a denomination

at General Conference. General Conference thus plays a crucial role as the official "voice" of the denomination.

UNITED METHODISM AND AMERICAN CULTURE

Studying the Methodist sexuality struggle is instructive for understanding LGBT inequality more generally, not least because UMs can be seen as the quintessential "middle Americans." At the time of my research, the UMC was the second-largest Protestant denomination in the country after the Southern Baptists, and the largest mainline denomination.[18] Perhaps more importantly, United Methodists have served as a kind of standard bearer for the United States as a whole. Campbell (1999: 7) observed that "Methodism and American culture . . . became linked to a degree that made it almost impossible to separate them."[19] During his presidency, Theodore Roosevelt is reported to have remarked that he "would rather address a Methodist audience than any other audience" because, as he put it, they "represent the great middle class and in consequence are the most representative church in America." Two sociologists of religion identify the United Methodist Church as "closely attuned to middle American values and outlook. . . . Informality, simple faith and piety, an optimistic and confident outlook, and a deep egalitarian spirit all found expression" in United Methodism, enabling it to become "the mainline of the mainline." A 1947 *Life Magazine* editorial said of the denomination that, "[in] many ways it is our most characteristic church. It is short on theology, long on good works, brilliantly organized, primarily middle-class, frequently bigoted, incurably optimistic, zealously missionary, and touchingly confident of the essential goodness of the man next door."

In addition to the cultural similarities between United Methodism and "American-ness," UMs and other Americans appear to share centrist values on many issues. Lawrence (1998: 11) notes that, "in terms of civic values, United Methodists occupy a presence in the middle of America. . . The defining perspective of United Methodists looks at issues from the center of American public opinion." Smalling (1992: 113) similarly reports that UMs are the "most demographically typical" of mainline denominations, and that "most members take a middle-of-the-road position on social issues." Clarifying the nature of this "middle-of-the-road position" with regard to homosexuality is a key goal of Chapters Eight and Nine.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONTEMPORARY WESTERN LESBIAN/GAY IDENTITY

Historical and anthropological data show that same-sex sexual and romantic desires and experiences are both transhistorical and transcultural. At the

same time, historians, sociologists and other scholars generally agree that identifying as "lesbian" or "gay" is a recent phenomenon. To understand the stakes for those involved in the UM sexuality struggle, it is necessary to differentiate between same-sex desires and a politicized "LGBT" identity. In this section of Chapter Two, I present historical highlights of the lesbian/gay identity as it has come to exist in the United States. [20]

BEGINNINGS

Adam (1987) and D'Emilio (1992) both point to the importance of developments in capitalism for the creation of a sexuality-based identity. Changes in wage labor and commodity production impacted the structure and functions of the nuclear family such that sexuality could and did become a locus of intimacy, pleasure and identity, rather than (just) a reproductive process. Adam (1987: 6) notes that in pre-capitalist societies, homosexuality was "enclosed" by already existing social relationships based on the family as both productive unit and moral unit. In contrast, as sexuality was progressively de-embedded, it became possible for homoerotic social networks to develop and for same-sex-oriented people to obtain self-awareness and a group identity. The rise of the city, with its attendant possibilities for anonymity, moved the process along as well, though earlier for men than for women.

By the turn of the 18th century, there was a proto-gay male community in London (ibid., 7); it grew up alongside Wesley's Methodist societies and classes, and came over to the colonies at about the same time.[21] At the end of the 19th century, there was an extensive gay male subculture in the United States as well as a growing lesbian subculture. As Adam (1987: 15) points out, "[homosexuals] were taking on the traits of ethnicity: separate social ties and subcultures, collective identity, and folklore about how to cope with a malicious outside world."

Toward the end of the 19th century, physicians and psychiatrists decided that medicine ought to take on the church as guardian of moral propriety, and what the church had done in rendering "sodomy" a heinous, sinful abomination, medicine now did in rendering homosexuality deviant, pathological, morbid, and sick. Homosexual "cases" began to show up in the psychiatric literature, as homosexuality became one of the "disorders" "identified" during the period. Among the "treatments" proposed, tested and carried out were castration, clitoridectomies and other kinds of mutilation, hysterectomies, drugging, electroshock, lobotomies, psychological "cures," and various "experiments," often on people confined to mental hospitals (ibid., 16).

As horrible as many of these "treatments" were, they, and the increasingly public discourse underlying them, had a curious effect in terms of solidifying the lesbian/gay identity. Foucault (1978: 43), for example, contrasted the earlier "sodomite" as "temporary aberration" with the new

"homosexual" as "species." Not only was the homosexual now a kind of person as far as the rest of the world was increasingly concerned, the homosexual was forced to confront a new kind of public understanding of his or her very being that had an unexpected impact. Did science prove that homosexuality was abnormal and the homosexual a pathological deviant? Very well, the homosexual would fight back, using science, appealing to normality. Soon, the moment would come to organize politically and to develop a more solid group-based identity.

"NEW POSSIBILITIES AND RENEWED SUPPRESSION"

World War II played an important role in further developing tensions and contradictions that already existed for lesbians and gay men. During the war, gay men met each other in the military, as did lesbians, while women back at home could socialize freely and remain unmarried with minimal penalty. Lesbian and gay soldiers often disembarked at U.S. port cities during and after the war; a growing number of these cities supported lesbian and gay communities. Young men and women who had been unmarried before the war did not need to return to conservative parts of the country after it, and many settled in the Bay Area, New Orleans, New York, and other major urban areas with known lesbian/gay populations. From the 1950s on, literally hundreds of lesbian novels would be written, subcultures would develop in unlikely places, and increasing numbers of "exposés" would scare the public while pointing the discerning homosexual to the best bars and street corners. At the same time, however, once the war was over, there was strong cultural pressure for the country to return to more traditional gender roles. It was from "this tension between new possibilities and renewed suppression [that] a homophile movement arose."[22]

The publication of Alfred Kinsey's works *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*[23] played a complex role in the development of lesbian and gay communities. First, Kinsey's penchant for documenting sexual behavior without judgment helped some lesbians and gay men to understand themselves as normal, moral people.[24] Second, Kinsey's finding that far more people than expected had sex with a same-sex partner signaled to gay men and lesbians that homosexuality was not so uncommon after all, and that they might be able to find partners more easily than they had previously thought. At the same time, the increasingly negative public reaction to Kinsey's work warned lesbians and gay men that most Americans still found homosexuality unacceptable.

While there were some small, short-lived gay organizations in the late 1940s, the permanent beginning of the homophile movement came with the 1950 establishment of the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles. In its founding statement the gay male group pledged, among other things, to "unite" homosexuals "isolated from their own kind," to "educate" homosexuals

and heterosexuals in order to develop "an ethical homosexual culture . . . paralleling the emerging cultures of our fellow-minorities—the Negro, Mexican, and Jewish Peoples," and "to assist our people who are victimized daily as a result of our oppression" (Adam 1987: 62–63). As suggested by this statement, Mattachine framed homosexuality as parallel to race, and homosexuals as a minority group that should be treated no differently than other minorities; this appeal to normality drew increasingly on the "expert witness" of sympathetic social scientists, medical researchers, and clergy. By 1952, there were 18 Mattachine chapters in greater Los Angeles, and a second gay male organization, One, Inc., had developed. These, along with the lesbian group Daughters of Bilitis, grew rapidly throughout the 1950s.

The homophile organizations were given early support by a book entitled *The Homosexual in America*, written pseudonymously by a gay man. While the book was hardly free of self-loathing, it was full of "minority" and "rights" language:

> We who are homosexual are a minority, not only numerically, but also as a result of a caste-like status in society. . . . Our minority status is similar . . . to that of national, religious and other ethnic groups: in the denial of civil liberties; in the legal, extra-legal and quasi-legal discrimination; in the assignment of an inferior social position; in the exclusion from the mainstream of life and culture. (Cory 1951: 3, 13–14)

Cory also argued that "there is . . . no homosexual problem except that created by the heterosexual society" (ibid., 227–228).

Just as the forerunners of the current LGBT movement were beginning to claim successfully that they were the set-upon of society rather than a danger to society, McCarthyism took effect. The cost to lesbians and gay men was tremendous. Thousands lost government, military and academic jobs, were imprisoned in jails and mental hospitals, and faced police entrapment and arrest in bars. In 1955, a scandal occurred in Boise, Idaho, in which nine men were each sentenced to five to fifteen years in prison—simply for "being homosexual" (Adam 1987: 58–60). By 1960, there were anti-sodomy laws on the books in all 50 states.[25]

As with turn-of-the-century medicalization, the McCarthyite attacks on homosexuals had both severe costs and unexpected benefits. The actions of the McCarthyites made it easier for increasing numbers of homosexuals to see themselves as victims of injustice rather than simply as flawed individuals; while there was a long way to go on this front, hostile articles in newspapers and "witch hunts" at the office raised ire as well as fear. Moreover, some of the angry individuals of the 1950s became the key activists of the 1960s.

By the early 1960s, a number of changes were taking place that would eventually improve the situation for homosexuals (now more often using

the terms "gay" and "lesbian") significantly. Black civil rights integrationism in the late 1950s and early 1960s was built around the demand to be let in, to be granted access to white institutions—a demand that lesbians and gay men were increasingly claiming as their own. Writers such as Frank Kameny, an astronomer who lost a government job because of his homosexuality, popularized the use of "gay rights" language.

In an essay entitled, "Gay is Good" (based on the phrase "black is beautiful"), Kameny demanded for gay men and lesbians "acceptance as full equals . . . basic rights and equality as citizens; our human dignity . . . our right to the pursuit of happiness [and the] right to love whom we wish."[26] Kameny, of course, was drawing directly on the black civil rights struggle. He frequently stressed the need for pride among lesbians and gay men, and compared homosexuality to race and Judaism in saying that why people were black, Jewish, or homosexual was irrelevant, as was whether they could be changed to whites, Christians, or heterosexuals.

Beyond the voices of Kameny and other writers, a variety of factors moved gay men and lesbians toward "out-and-proud" activism during the 1960s. Taboos on the subject were weakening, both in the mainstream media and the alternative press. Activists were picketing at the White House, challenging discrimination at bars, monitoring and complaining about practices of police harassment, and even winning the support of the American Civil Liberties Union. Liberal clergy (including Methodists) in areas such as San Francisco and New York were brought into the fray in support of lesbian/gay civil rights at this time. Increasingly, activists in new left, student, antiwar, black power, feminist, and other movements were coming out as lesbian or gay and experiencing everything from bemusement to hatred from heterosexuals in these movements. It was only a matter of time before the desire for a gay culture where gay people could be free would combine with the necessary "insurgent consciousness"[27] to bring lesbian/gay activism to a new level.

STONEWALL

Lesbians and gay men took their activism to that new level on Friday night, June 27–28, 1969, during a routine police raid of a New York City gay bar called the Stonewall. As Adam (1987: 75) notes, such raids "were an American institution, a police rite to 'manage' the powerless and disrespectable—and in the preceding three weeks, five New York gay bars had already been raided." On this night, the powerless and disrespectable fought back. Drag queens, butch dykes, street people, and bar boys confronted the police with jeers, camp, coins, stones, parking meters, and bricks. By the next day, "gay power" graffiti was appearing around the neighborhood. The fighting continued that night, and by the end of the weekend, the bar was heavily damaged but "gay liberation" was afoot. It spread across the country at

breakneck speed, partly because of the communities already in existence, partly because of other kinds of youth activism going on around the country with which gay liberation had some affinity.

It's important to be mindful of the cultural context within which gay liberation occurred. Social change movements were challenging many of the elements of society that had previously appeared to be impenetrable: the military-industrial complex; the banality of life under capitalism; the authority of parents and politicians; the privilege and superiority of whites and men; even the value and importance of sexual repression. As gay liberation spread, a body of writing developed suggesting that its true task was not merely the liberation of the homosexual, but rather the liberation of the homosexual in everybody, since all human sexuality existed along a homo-hetero continuum.[28]

Several points about the politics of gay liberation are essential to understanding the worldview of UM LGBT people. First, gay liberation turned "coming out of the closet" from a personal, private decision into a political act and public strategy. As D'Emilio and Freedman (1997: 323) note, it "was incorporated into the basic assumptions of what it meant to be gay. As such, it came to represent not simply a single act but the adoption of an identity in which the erotic played a central role." Needless to say, coming out included coming out at work, even if "work" was a church or religious institution. Second, coming out came to be increasingly linked with living authentically and with integrity, being true to oneself. Coming out thus invoked one's deepest sense of self, even as it expansively led one out into the world in commitment to others. It was at once utterly personal and completely political. Third, the shame, self-hatred, guilt and furtiveness that had often characterized lesbian and gay life earlier would have to go. Not only were lesbians and gay men to be "out" (of "the closet"), they were to be "proud." A healthy, liberated lesbian or gay man had nothing to hide, nothing about which to be shameful or furtive, guilty, or self-loathing. For lesbians and gay men of faith, it was crucial to remove any cognitive dissonance related to tensions between one's religion and one's sexuality; this was mostly done by coming to understand one's sexuality as both essential to oneself and as God-given (Thumma 1991).

QUASI-ETHNIC COMMUNITY, CIVIL RIGHTS POLITICS

While gay liberation was by any measure a radical movement, it gave way to a much more moderate, assimilationist lesbian/gay community, focusing on rights rather than liberation. As Bronski (1998: 70) has noted, the changes brought about by gay liberation were its own undoing. As it became easier to come out with pride, it became easier to go to bars, socialize, and be publicly but not "politically" gay. Moreover, if coming out was political, those not inclined to left-wing protesting could comfort themselves that

they were being politically active simply by telling officemates how they had spent their weekend—or with whom they lived. More people came out, including more politically, socially and culturally conventional people. As a result, "new spokespeople, acting openly for the 'gay minority,' argued for 'rights,' for the legitimate claims to space of what was now an almost 'ethnic' identity, and became the new integrationists" (Weeks 1985: 198).

The consolidation of a minority status has obvious advantages. It fits easily into the common discourse of liberal pluralist societies. It offers legitimacy to the claims of the oppressed minority and can act as a spur for legal and cultural reforms. The goal of lesbian/gay integrationists was to gain rights, and more generally to gain access to mainstream institutions, including organized religion. As with the civil rights movement, lesbian/gay rights activists focused on "identity-based interest-group politics" (Seidman 1993: 117). The civil rights movement had been the model for gay activists from the early 1960s until it was interrupted by the liberationist, "free the homosexual in everyone" moment; now, post-Stonewall, liberationism was too hard to sustain, and, as Bronski (1998: 71) argues, "the civil rights movement provided a ready model of political organizing for a movement that had very little history." Moreover, gay rights groups saw the extent to which the black civil rights movement had been able to garner moral authority in white society, and decided that modeling their claims on black civil rights claims was the best way to obtain a similar degree of moral authority.

That homosexuality was developing into a "quasi-ethnic identity" is made even clearer by the astoundingly rapid development of lesbian/gay culture (often separate by gender, sometimes together) and community organizations. In 1969 there were 50 homophile organizations; in 1973 there were more than 800, and in 1978 there were thousands.[29] These organizations included theater troupes, community centers, health clinics, musical ensembles, publishing companies, political action groups, discussion groups, social clubs, religious organizations, and such specialized businesses as law offices and travel agencies. Gay caucuses developed within professions, as well as within virtually all other kinds of organizations. Cultural separatism was intended as a mark of normalcy by some, as with the 1981 comment of the New York Gay Men's Chorus leader that "[We] show the straight community that we're just as normal as they are."[30]

A group's desire for, and claim to, normalcy does not necessarily mean that others accept the claim. Homosexuality has long been defined as sinful, pathological, and otherwise disgusting or wrong; since the rise of the homophile movement it has also increasingly been identified as political. LGBT people who are public about their sexuality or gender identity are understood by most heterosexual Americans as pushing a political agenda simply by being unabashedly open. Moreover, the politicization of homosexuality and LGBT people is not inherent to homosexuality in some biological sense, but rather derives from the historical circumstances described

here, in which the contemporary LGBT identity came into being in a context of prejudice, discrimination, and eventual resistance. To put it differently, LGBT people are who we are today because of the way heterosexuals have historically treated homosexuality and, therefore, because of the way we have come to understand ourselves in light of that treatment: as people whose experiences of sexual and romantic attraction make up an undeniable aspect of ourselves, for which we are wrongly devalued by others.

THE UMC HOMOSEXUALITY STRUGGLE, 1972–APRIL 2000

1970s

The United Methodist inclusion struggle began soon after the United Methodist Church came into being in 1968.[31] At General Conference that year, a quadrennial study commission was appointed to come up with a social creed and statement of social principles for the new United Methodist Church.[32] By 1972, Stonewall had occurred and gay rights issues had become prominent, leading the study commission to decide that homosexuality needed to be addressed in some way.

The new social principles presented at the 1972 General Conference included a strictly "pastoral" paragraph on homosexuality, which neither condemned nor condoned it. The paragraph, which was based on arguments from legal and medical professionals, deemed homosexuals "persons of sacred worth" in need of "the ministry and guidance of the church" and insisted that "all persons are entitled to have their human and civil rights ensured." The paragraph did not comment on the issue of lesbian/gay clergy, though at least one gay pastor had had his credentials removed between 1968 and 1972.[33] Once it reached the plenary floor, the pastoral paragraph faced intense hostility and was debated at length.[34] Eventually a lay delegate added the phrase, "although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching."[35] The first mention of same-sex unions was also made at the 1972 General Conference, when the sentence, "We do not recommend marriage between two persons of the same sex," was added to the *Book of Discipline*.

The 1972 General Conference was also the point at which the Forum for Scriptural Christianity, more commonly known as Good News (after the name of its magazine), made its first appearance at General Conference.[36] Good News, a key caucus on the evangelical/conservative side of the homosexuality struggle in the church, describes itself as "a voice for repentance, an agent for reform, and a catalyst for renewal within the UMC." It pledges, among other things, to "advocate Scriptural Christianity with holy living among United Methodists;" to "nurture evangelical fellowship;" to "challenge unfairness wherever it is found in the church;" and to "create and/or assist in creating

supplemental church structures if necessary." Its goals include "encourag[ing] evangelicals to witness effectively for Christ within United Methodism;" "proclaim[ing] biblical truths" and "sound[ing] the alarm about unbiblical philosophies;" and "deepen[ing] appreciation for our Wesleyan heritage." Since its beginnings in 1967, Good News has put out a monthly journal, newsletters and information sheets; sponsored convocations and think-tank-style meetings; and supported a wide range of evangelical renewal groups in the United Methodist Church. Over the years it has developed an organizational structure apart from the United Methodist Church, with its own missionaries, mission board, publishing house and church school literature.

Good News has been, and remains, strongly opposed to any support of homosexuality (or homosexuals) on the part of the church. In 1975, responding to potential pro-gay legislation for the 1976 General Conference, Good News deplored "sex perverts preaching to us" and called homosexuality "leprosy on the body of Christ" (Wall 1975: 243). At about the same time, a brief article on the caucus mentioned that it opposed the employment of homosexuals in responsible positions in the denomination, and felt that those already there should be fired in keeping with the precedent of disciplining those who "violate Scripture" ("Good News to Publish Confirmation Materials" 1975).

1975 was also the year in which the first official gay caucus within the United Methodist Church formed, possibly as a reaction to Good News. The first organizing meeting of the UMC Gay Caucus included a man who had been denied admission to Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary because he was gay.

The 1976 General Conference retained the 1972 incompatibility statement and added to the legally binding section of the *Book of Discipline* the following statement on funding: "[The council] shall be responsible for ensuring that no board, agency, committee, commission, or council shall give United Methodist funds to any gay caucus or group, or otherwise use such funds to promote the acceptance of homosexuality. The council shall have the right to stop such expenditures."[37] Delegates also revised the language in the Social Principles related to same-sex unions to read, "We do not recognize a relationship between two persons of the same sex as constituting marriage."

Between the 1976 and 1980 General Conferences, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary denied graduation to two gay students solely because of their sexual orientation, and a UMC employee was fired for being a lesbian. However, in 1978 a self-affirming gay man was retained as the pastor of a United Methodist congregation in New York City, and the UMC Gay Caucus, which had tripled in size, renamed itself Affirmation: United Methodists for Lesbian/Gay Concerns.[38] Affirmation's statement (2000b) read as follows:

> Together we: (1) Proclaim a gospel of respect, love and justice; (2) Relentlessly pursue policies and processes that support full participation by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people in all areas and

> levels of the United Methodist Church; (3) Overcome the barriers that diminish our common humanity by excluding or judging people because of their race, gender, class, or physical abilities; (4) Empower people to undertake works of inclusion and justice where they are . . . We provide theological foundations and socio-cultural insights leading the church to respond to God's call to be fully inclusive. When necessary, we lovingly challenge and confront the policies and practices that reflect institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism.

The first decade of the UMC inclusion struggle is most notable for the two antigay additions to the *Book of Discipline* (language on the incompatibility of homosexuality and Christian teaching, and a ban on funding organizations that "promoted" homosexuality) as well as the emergence of organizations on both sides of the struggle that remain centrally involved 30 years later.

1980s

The 1972 "incompatibility" clause and the 1976 funding ban were reaffirmed at the 1980 General Conference. Earlier reference to homosexual unions was replaced by a statement that said, in part, "We affirm the sanctity of the marriage covenant, which is expressed in love, mutual support, personal commitment, and shared fidelity between a man and a woman."[39]

In 1982, another key conservative player emerged.[40] The Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD) had mostly focused on Latin America and the evils of communism in the 1980s; after 1989, it turned to "radical feminism" and thence to homosexuality as dangers to the church. UMAction, the IRD's watchdog for the UMC, "defends traditional Christian beliefs and practices in the spirit of the father of Methodism, John Wesley. UMAction goes to church agency meetings, studies church publications, and interviews church officials. UMAction publishes its findings in news publications as well as in its own UMAction Briefing." UMAction appears to serve primarily as a guardian of doctrinal and theological boundaries.

In 1982, the question of how the denomination ought to deal with gay pastors came to a head when a Denver bishop appointed an openly gay pastor, stating publicly that he did not believe homosexuality to be a sin. Three Georgia churches then filed charges that his stance undermined the authority of the Bible, and at least one church accused him of heresy. As a result, the Judicial Council was asked whether evidence of homosexuality was sufficient to bar a candidate from ordination or defrock a lesbian/gay pastor. In 1983, the Judicial Council ruled that homosexual people were not automatically struck from viability as candidates for the ordained ministry, since the *Book of Discipline* did not prohibit the ordination or appointment of "practicing homosexuals."

Unsurprisingly, the 1984 General Conference focused on requirements for ordination and the delegates adopted, as a standard for ordained clergy, commitment to "fidelity in marriage and celibacy in singleness."[41] The following language, specific to homosexuality, was also added to the (legally binding) section of the *Book of Discipline* that deals with ordained ministry:

> While persons set apart by the Church for ordained ministry are subject to all the frailties of the human condition and the pressures of society, they are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world. Since the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching, self-avowed practicing homosexuals are not to be accepted as candidates, ordained as ministers, or appointed to serve in The United Methodist Church. (*Book of Discipline* 2000: 185)[42]

In response to the vote, Affirmation unveiled the Reconciling Congregation Program for churches that were willing to "declare their support for the concerns of lesbians and gay men" (Bowman and Floyd 2000: 11). The Reconciling Congregation Program (renamed the Reconciling Ministries Network in 2000) has since become a central inclusionist caucus. It describes itself as "a growing movement of United Methodist individuals, congregations, campus ministries, and other groups working for the full participation of all people in the United Methodist Church" (Reconciling Ministries Network 2001). According to Perkins (n.d.), the caucus has a threefold purpose:

> to strengthen local churches by helping them consider justice and ministry issues arising from the involvement of gay men and lesbians; to support local churches that are willing to be visible servant churches in ministry to and with gay and lesbian United Methodists; to identify local churches where all persons, including lesbian, gay and bisexual persons, are welcomed as full participants in the Body of Christ.

Now that the *Book of Discipline* provided grounds for the removal of lesbian and gay pastors, Good News brought charges against Julian Rush, the gay minister that Bishop Wheatley had appointed. A formal inquiry occurred, after which Rush was found not guilty, on the grounds that there was no proof of his "practicing" homosexuality.

Shortly thereafter, the denomination faced a homosexuality-related trial. Pastor Rose Mary Denman came out as a lesbian in 1984, after which her bishop filed a formal complaint against her, asking that her clerical orders be removed. As was her right, Denman requested an ecclesiastical trial and was tried on August 24, 1987. The jury convicted her but provided the most lenient possible sentence: suspension from her ministry until the next year's Annual Conference. Ironically, Denman was attempting to transfer her clergy orders from the UMC to the Unitarian Universalist Association,

which formally welcomes lesbians as clergy, when her bishop pressed charges.[43]

The 1988 General Conference passed a resolution establishing a homosexuality study process for the 1988–1992 quadrennium. The only other homosexuality-related action at this General Conference involved a small change in the Social Principles statement, so that the "incompatibility" section of the paragraph now read as follows: "Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons."[44]

In 1988, the Evangelical Renewal Fellowship of the California-Nevada Annual Conference founded the "Transforming Congregations" program to assist congregations in supporting UMs (and other Christians) who wanted to "come out of" homosexuality and become heterosexual. Transforming Congregations (n.d.) describes itself as "a movement among 'mainline' denomination churches to affirm that those who deal with homosexual temptations are loved and that Christ can and does have power to change those who face such temptations." Their mission statement reads, "Transforming Congregations encourages transforming ministry to all persons affected by relational brokenness resulting in sexual sin." The organization seeks to:

> affirm the Biblical position that God loves all persons, that homosexual practice is one sin among many and that the Holy Spirit is available to transform all persons—including homosexual persons; minister to persons struggling with homosexuality, their families, and all others affected by homosexuality as partners in Christ's work of healing; call the church to recognize its need for repentance and healing of its homophobic and accommodating responses; integrate all persons striving to live as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ into full membership in the local church.

During the 1980s, two new conservative organizations (the IRD and the Transforming Congregations program) and one inclusionist organization (the Reconciling Congregation Program) came into existence. The denomination prohibited the ordination of sexually active lesbian/gay pastors, and a lesbian pastor was tried and suspended from ministry. The UMC ended the decade by beginning a study on homosexuality.

1990s

The report resulting from the homosexuality study process was presented at the 1992 General Conference. The report asked General Conference to remove the language condemning homosexual practice and replace it

with an acknowledgment that the church "has been unable to arrive at a common mind on the compatibility of homosexual practice with Christian faith. Many consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching. Others believe it acceptable when practiced in a context of human covenantal faithfulness." Most committee members felt that the present state of knowledge in the various relevant fields "does not provide a satisfactory basis upon which the church can responsibly maintain the condemnation of all homosexual practice." The minority felt that the present state of knowledge did not provide a satisfactory basis "upon which the church can responsibly alter its previously held position." Based on the committee members' encounters with lesbian, gay, and bisexual people who had faced significant discrimination from both church and society, the committee also recommended adding a strong civil rights paragraph to the Social Principles.

The committee's report was "received" but not "approved." Delegates to the 1992 conference voted to retain the church's stand that homosexual practice is "incompatible with Christian teaching." The civil rights paragraph was approved on a separate vote; the resulting text read:

> Equal Rights regardless of Sexual Orientation—Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for homosexual persons. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting their rightful claims where they have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against gays and lesbians.[45]

In 1993, the focus of the homosexuality struggle in the UMC shifted away from the ordination issue and toward whether pastors could perform holy unions for same-sex couples. The Judicial Council ruled that two attempts by Annual Conferences to allow for pastoral discretion in performing holy unions were out of order, and further noted that only General Conference has the authority to establish certain rites and rituals of the church.

In 1995, a new conservative organization made its appearance. The Confessing Movement issued its statement that year,[46] based on the key confession of "Jesus Christ: The Son, The Savior, The Lord." The purpose of the Confessing Movement is "to contend for the apostolic faith within the United Methodist Church and seek to reclaim and reaffirm the church's faith in Wesleyan terms;" the movement exists "to enable the United Methodist Church to retrieve its classical doctrinal identity, and to live it out as disciples of Jesus Christ."[47] While the Confessing Movement may appear to be focused on matters of language rather than politics, it became an

important political organization in the homosexuality struggle; it clearly understood "contending for the apostolic faith" as challenging un-Christian homosexuality in the church.

As the Confessing Movement was coming into existence, a minor incident suggested that the conservative caucuses were not yet able to sway denominational agencies on homosexuality issues. In 1995, Jeanne Audrey Powers, an executive with the UMC General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, came out as a lesbian about a year from retirement and after more than 35 years of service to the denomination. Good News immediately demanded her removal. The commission president and others supported her and she was not fired.[48]

At the beginning of the 1996 General Conference, 15 bishops (nicknamed the "Denver 15") called a press conference to say that they disagreed with the denominational stance on homosexuality. Their statement read as follows:

> We the undersigned wish to affirm the commitment made at our consecration to the vows to uphold the discipline of the church. However, we must confess the pain we feel over our personal convictions that are contradicted by the proscriptions in the *Discipline* against gay and lesbian persons within our church and from our ordained and diaconal ministers . . . We believe it is time to break the silence and state where we are on this issue that is hurting and silencing countless faithful Christians. We will continue our responsibility to the order and the discipline of the church but urge United Methodist churches to open the doors in gracious hospitality to all brothers and sisters in the faith.[49]

The 1996 General Conference made three changes in the church's position on homosexuality. First, delegates added language defining a "self-avowed practicing homosexual" "To mean that a person openly acknowledges to a bishop, district superintendent, district committee of ordained ministry, board of ordained ministry or clergy session that the person is a practicing homosexual."[50] Second, a declaration that "ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches" was added to the Social Principles (but not to the legally binding section of the *Book of Discipline*).[51] Finally, delegates added to the Social Principles the following statement:

> Basis: The United States of America, a nation built on equal rights, has denied the right of homosexuals to actively serve their country while being honest about who they are. Meanwhile, the United Methodist Church is moving toward accepting all people for who they are. The United Methodist Church needs to be an advocate for equal civil rights for all marginalized groups, including homosexuals. Conclusion: The

> U.S. military should not exclude persons from service solely on the basis of sexual orientation.[52]

On January 1, 1997, a statement entitled "In All Things Charity" was released to the public. It had been drafted by fifteen clergy in response to the 1996 General Conference's new prohibition of the performance of holy unions by UM pastors.[53] The document did not directly encourage pastors to challenge the *Book of Discipline*, but it made a clear statement of opposition to the prohibition and led to the development of a clergy movement by the same name. In February, evangelicals responded with their own statement, "The More Excellent Way: God's Plan Re-Affirmed."

During this period, Affirmation organized the Covenant Relationships Network (CORNET) to support the right of UM clergy to perform holy unions (Bloom 1997). CORNET seeks "to continue the tradition of hosting worship services that celebrate and witness to same-gender covenant relationships in United Methodist churches" while "resist[ing] actions that try to withdraw this means of grace from same-gender persons" (Affirmation 1998b). Between 1997 and 1999, several UMC pastors carried out well-publicized holy unions, were eventually charged by their bishops and brought to trial, and punished by suspension or defrocking.

In late 1998, the Judicial Council ruled that the statement, "Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches" did have the force of church law, its location in the Social Principles notwithstanding. Clergy violating this prohibition could now legitimately be charged with violating the order and discipline of the church, could be tried in a church court, and could receive penalties upon conviction including the loss of ministerial credentials.

The Judicial Council ruling galvanized inclusionist pastors across the denomination. On World Communion Sunday 1998, Pastor Don Fado preached a sermon that included his stated desire to carry out a ceremony of union as soon as possible as an "act of ecclesiastical disobedience." Within a week, a lesbian couple, both highly regarded in the Annual Conference, approached Fado requesting a holy union. Pastors from across the country participated in their holy union on January 16, 1999. By May, charges had been filed against many of the pastors from the California-Nevada Annual Conference. The group facing charges became known as the "Sacramento 68," because Fado was based in Sacramento and the ceremony had been performed there.

During the 1990s, the denomination signaled its mixed feelings about homosexuality as General Conferences prohibited holy unions while approving two different civil rights-related paragraphs. Another important conservative organization came into being, and inclusionists responded to

the holy union prohibition by carrying out public holy unions and, in some cases, being tried for them.

2000

The year began with the public announcement of Bishop Jack Tuell, who had charged a pastor with performing a holy union, that he had been wrong in his opposition to homosexuality. Tuell gave a publicized sermon on the topic entitled, "'Doing a New Thing:' The United Methodist Church and Homosexuality."[54]

Tuell's announcement was closely followed by the announcement that the Sacramento 68 would not be brought to trial for having carried out the mass holy union a year before. The Annual Conference's Committee on Investigation had held hearings in which the pastors were invited to respond to the charges. On February 11, the committee reported that the charges filed did not certify as a "charge proper for trial." The Annual Conference bishop, Melvin Talbert, noted that the committee's decision reflected his Annual Conference's longstanding "commitments for inclusiveness and justice" (Jeffrey 2000).

The response of the evangelical and conservative caucuses was predictable and speedy. On February 16, Good News, the Confessing Movement, and UMAction announced the formation of the Coalition for United Methodist Accountability, or CUMA. CUMA described itself as a coalition of "UM laity and clergy who have come together to seek doctrinal, fiscal, and procedural accountability in the life of the UMC."[55] CUMA immediately began looking for examples of "disobedience" among pastors and bishops within the church. They also hired a legal team to monitor future cases and charges that might arise within the church, and they promised to take legal action if they found evidence of failure on the part of a church official to follow the *Book of Discipline* or any other church policies. As an example, CUMA helped a laywoman from the California-Nevada Annual Conference file a complaint against Bishop Talbert later in the spring; the complaint claimed that Talbert's handling of the Sacramento 68 case was cause for a charge of "disobedience to the order and discipline" of the church.[56] A separate but overlapping coalition, UM Decision 2000: A Coalition of Renewal Groups, had already formed for the purposes of moving General Conference 2000 in a direction of their liking.

It was now the turn of the inclusionist caucuses (Affirmation, the Methodist Federation for Social Action[57] and the Reconciling Congregation Program) to respond, and they did so with the formation of a working coalition for General Conference 2000, rapidly approaching. Called AMAR (from the organizations' initials and from the Spanish verb "to love"), the coalition had been developing for a year or more, but did not

publicly announce its work until CUMA's formation (McKay 2000). The inclusionist group In All Things Charity[58] took a leadership role in the coalition.

In April 2000, the newly formed United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church joined the coalition.[59] This organization was "dedicated to bridging the movements to eradicate all forms of oppression and discrimination in the church."

As these organizations were developing various kinds of witness for General Conference 2000, an organization called Soulforce was planning a training session in nonviolence and direct action in Cleveland to prepare people—UMs and others—to protest at General Conference.[60] Soulforce was the brainchild of Mel White, a former ghostwriter for the Religious Right who had, after many years, come out and set about creating an organization that would challenge institutional religion regarding the harm it had done to LGBT people. Soulforce's mission is:

> to help end the suffering of God's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered children . . . to help change the minds and hearts of religious leaders whose anti-homosexual campaigns lead (directly and indirectly) to that suffering. . . . to be guided in our every action by SOULFORCE the principles of relentless nonviolent resistance as lived and taught by M.K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. . . . . And in the process of bringing hope and healing to our society find redirection and renewal for our minds and spirits.

Soulforce promised to be at General Conference 2000 "in the spirit of love and reconciliation to help our United Methodist friends see the truth and act upon it or to confront and condemn their untruth if they do not."

General Conference 2000 was scheduled to begin on May 2. As April drew to a close, caucuses, delegates and General Conference organizers were feverishly at work as they, staff members from general boards and agencies, and other interested observers prepared to travel to Cleveland.[61] Those on both sides considered this particular General Conference a probable watershed. The very choice of UM Decision 2000's name and the urgency of the message in its video[62] indicated its hopes; the thousands of letters written by inclusionists were filled with theirs.

GENERAL CONFERENCE 2000 OUTCOMES

When General Conference 2000 drew to an end, the incompatibility clause and all of the homosexuality-related prohibitions (holy unions, pastors, funding) from the 1996 *Book of Discipline* remained in place, as did the civil rights and military equality paragraphs in the Social Principles. Multiple attempts to modify or soften prohibitive language failed.

General Conference 2000 moved the holy union prohibition from the Social Principles section on marriage to a legally binding part of the *Book of Discipline* dealing with ordained clergy, where it appears in a list of "unauthorized conduct." The delegates also amended the core paragraph on homosexuality to read:

> Homosexual persons no less than heterosexual persons are individuals of sacred worth. All persons need the ministry and guidance of the church in their struggles for human fulfillment, as well as the spiritual and emotional care of a fellowship that enables reconciling relationships with God, with others, and with self. Although we do not condone the practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all. We implore families and churches not to reject or condemn their lesbian and gay members and friends. We commit ourselves to be in ministry for and with all persons.[63]

Additionally, General Conference 2000 passed a resolution mandating continued dialogue about homosexuality, along with a requirement that candidates for ministry be willing to relate to people without regard to sexual orientation. Several new resolutions addressing acts of hate were also adopted, as was a resolution calling on the church to be in ministry to persons of all sexual orientations.[64]

Delegates rejected (by a vote of 705 to 210) a "loyalty oath" proposal that would have required pastors and ministry candidates to sign a document declaring that homosexuality is not "God's perfect will for anyone. I will not practice it. I will not promote it. I will not allow its promotion to be encouraged under my authority," and also rejected several proposed transforming ministries programs. General Conference 2000 also rejected petitions that would have denied membership to homosexuals and that would have denied ordination to people who supported the ordination of homosexuals.

COMPARING THE LGBT INCLUSION STRUGGLE ACROSS DENOMINATIONS

While it may have some unique elements, the UMC sexuality conflict is more like the conflicts in other mainline denominations than it is unlike them. The final section of this chapter describes key similarities and differences between United Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Episcopalians, focusing on specific topics of controversy and their historical timelines.[65] The section begins with a table of selected homosexuality-related events in the four denominations under discussion.[66]

* Only actions specific to denominational assemblies (and, for the Presbyterians, follow-up at the presbytery level) are included. Key:

Table 2.1 Selected Homosexuality-Related Actions in Four Denominations*

Year	*United Methodists* (UMC)	Presbyterians (PCUSA)	Lutherans (ELCA)	Episcopalians (ECUSA)
U.S. Members	8,040,577 (12/2005)	2.3 million (current)	4,774,203 (12/2006)	2.4 million (current)
1970		*CR*; I	*CR*	
1972	*A*; *CR*; I			
1976	*A*; *CR*; F; I	*S*		*A; CR*
1977		*CR*		
1978		*CR*; O		
1979		O		O**
1980	*A*; *CR*; F; I			
1982				*A*; *CR*
1984	*A*; *CR*; F; I; O			
1985		O		*A*; *S*
1988	*A*; *CR*; F; I; O; *S*	*S*	*S*	*A*; *CR*; *D*
1989			O	
1990			O	
1991		O; *P*; *PUB*	*A*	*CR*
1992	*A*; *CR*; F; I; O; *P*; *PUB*	O		
1993		O; *D*; *P*; *S*	*CR*; *PUB*	
1994		HU***; O	O	
1995			*A*	
1996	*A*; *CR*; F; HU; I; O; *P*	O; *CR*; *P*		
1997		O	O	
1999		*D*; O; *S*	O	
2000	*A*; *CR*; F; HU; I; O; *P*	HU***; *P*		*D*; *P*
2001			*P*; *S*	
2002		O		
2003		O		
2004	*A*; *CR*; F; HU; I; O; *P*	O		
2005			O	
2006		O		

Sources: Almen 2007; Anderson 1997; Banerjee 2007; Cadge 2002; Comstock 1996; Hutcheson and Shriver 1999; Robinson 2000a; Robinson 2003a; Robinson 2003b; Robinson 2003c; Robinson 2003d; Robinson 2005a; Robinson 2005b; Robinson 2005c; Robinson 2006b; Robinson 2006d; "Who We Are" 2007; Rev. Dr. Gail Murphy-Geiss, personal communication.

A = denominational affirmation of gays and lesbians as people, usually coupled with an invitation to participate in the life of the church; *CR* = denominational affirmation of civil rights for lesbian/gay people; *D* = a call for dialogue; F = rule against funding groups that "support" homosexuality; HU = prohibition against clergy performance of holy unions; I = language claiming that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching;" O = rule against ordaining "practicing homosexuals;" *P* = protest at denominational assembly; *PUB* = publication of study task force statements; *S* = a call for a denominational study of homosexuality. Actions taken by inclusionists, and events that might be considered positive for inclusionists, are italicized.

** Overturned by a bishop in 1996.

***While passed at the General Assembly, neither ban was approved by the majority of presbyteries, so the denomination does not have a holy union prohibition in effect.

As Table 2.1 demonstrates, all four denominations have sought to acknowledge the humanity of LGBT persons and to affirm LGBT civil rights, while prohibiting ordination of "practicing" LGBT ministry candidates, holy unions, or both of these. In some cases, the prohibitions have had the force of church law and in other cases, they would best be characterized as "church guidance," but either type of language can been used to justify the prohibitions. At one time or another, all four denominations have sought to defrock clergy for having same-sex relationships or performing holy unions, or have charged church leaders with ordaining LGBT clergy or failing to discipline pastors for celebrating holy unions. Each denomination has evangelical/conservative groups that seek a return to traditional mores and that work to uphold prohibitions; each denomination has an inclusionist movement. All four denominations have pastors who are more or less open about being lesbian or gay, and all four denominations have ministers of all sexualities who have carried out holy unions. All four denominations have carried out studies on sexuality or homosexuality; each denomination has faced protests at its churchwide assembly.

By the mid-1970s, each of the four denominations had begun to address the question of how to respond to its LGBT members. Openly gay candidates for ministry presented themselves during this time; most of them were turned down. Support groups for LGBT denominational members began to develop. By 1977, according to Comstock (1996: 9), "[fourteen religious bodies supported] civil rights for homosexuals while maintaining that homosexuality was incompatible with their own traditional teachings."

Between 1978 and 1984, three of the four denominations forbade the ordination of partnered LGBT pastors; had the UMC succeeded in passing the prohibition in 1980 when it was first proposed, all but the Lutherans would have added the restriction to their denominational lawbooks within a three-year period. During the remainder of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the sexuality conflict in all four denominations focused largely or entirely on matters of ordination.

The Presbyterians, United Methodists and Lutherans all carried out sexuality studies that resulted in denominational reports in the early 1990s. These publications were remarkably similar, both in terms of the proposals put forth in them and in terms of how church and society responded. In each case, a majority of those on the task force called for an acceptance of homosexuality that would have permitted openly gay pastors, same-sex holy unions, or both of these. Homosexuality per se was treated as morally equivalent to heterosexuality, and other criteria for evaluating sexual activity were proposed. The UM and Presbyterian reports also included a minority opinion arguing for retaining the traditional view of homosexuality as sinful. In each of the three cases, the denominational response was overwhelmingly negative, and for the Presbyterian and Lutheran reports public response was largely negative as well. Americans seemed horrified that churches in particular would affirm homosexuality. None of the three majority reports were approved by the denominational gatherings at which they were presented.

Also by the early 1990s, all but the Episcopalians were facing regular protests at their denominational gatherings, though not until almost ten years later were arrests common. By that time, the Episcopal Church had also experienced at least one protest at a denominational meeting; a description of this protest suggests that some LGBT Episcopalians were receiving discriminatory treatment and that many were unsatisfied by the denomination's unwillingness to institutionalize a blessing for holy unions, even if it did not forbid them outright.

For all these commonalities, the denominations have experienced their sexuality struggles in somewhat different ways. For example, the Presbyterians had carried out their first sexuality study in the mid-1970s; the Episcopalians did not carry out such a study until 1985, and the United Methodists and Lutherans authorized their first studies in 1988. Only the UM and Presbyterian denominational gatherings ever succeeded in prohibiting holy unions. Moreover, in the PCUSA, a majority of the district-level governing bodies called presbyteries must approve certain General Assembly actions for them to become church law; since the presbyteries did not approve either of the two General Assembly holy union prohibitions, the Presbyterians do not have such a prohibition in effect. The United Methodist Church is thus the only denomination of the four with a holy union prohibition on the books.

The Episcopal experience is the most unlike that of the United Methodists. Episcopalians have been much more likely to affirm LGBT people and their civil rights, and much less likely to prohibit their full participation in the life of the church. The 1979 ordination prohibition was overturned in 1996, meaning that Episcopalians are currently the only denomination of the four to neither forbid holy unions nor to prohibit partnered lesbian/gay pastors. The Episcopal Church is well known to have many such pastors, and in 2003 elected and consecrated an openly gay bishop in a long-term

relationship. The Episcopal Church is not, however, free of tension over the issue, and has been losing members and pastors to more conservative sectors of the global Anglican Communion. Since 2000, the Anglican Communion has pressed the Episcopal Church in the United States and Canada to return to traditional sexual mores or face consequences; Episcopalians have largely resisted, citing the Episcopal Church's commitment to "full equality" for all people, including gay men and lesbians. The Episcopal Church has, however, been willing to honor the requests of the Anglican Communion by refraining from developing a church-wide sacred ritual for the blessing of holy unions; in 2006 the Episcopal Church also passed a resolution encouraging ministries not to consecrate any openly gay bishops.

That the sexuality-related issues faced by UMs have also arisen for the other denominations is not surprising, since the churchly struggles have not taken place in a social vacuum. Early denominational statements supporting civil rights for "homosexuals" were a response to the lesbian/gay rights movement; at the same time, asked by the lesbian/gay rights movement to affirm homosexuality as morally neutral or good, the denominations were mostly unwilling to do so. Prohibiting the ordination of non-celibate lesbian/gay pastors followed attempts by sexually active lesbian/gay seminarians to get ordained; removal of ordained LGBT clergy from their congregations followed their public announcements of their sexuality. For the most part, only after American society began struggling with issues of same-sex marriage did United Methodists and Presbyterians move to prohibit holy unions "in their churches and by their pastors."

Studying the UM sexuality struggle, while not identical to studying struggles in other denominations, can deeply inform an understanding about the mainline Protestant situation more generally. I thus draw on material from all four denominations in the chapters on culture wars, homophobia and heterosexism, social closure, and institutional logics, and ultimately claim that research on the UMC conflict can help make sense of other denominational conflicts and of American struggles around LGBT rights more generally.

3 Research Methodology

This chapter describes the methodological aspects of my research. After a brief introductory section on the centrality of meaning for the project, I discuss the research process, which began with review of documents, continued with fieldwork at the UMC 2000 General Conference, and concluded with a series of intensive interviews. Because concerns are frequently raised about how well ethnographic research conforms to certain social science standards, I then address accuracy, generalizability, reliability, validity and bias in my study. The chapter closes with a discussion of the extent to which this project should be considered an autoethnography and what such a designation might mean.

A NOTE ON MEANING

Meaning is at the heart of this study. My primary interests are in how people understand situations, in how those understandings are linked to choices that they make, and in how those choices (directly or indirectly) impact themselves and others. I understand human beings to be "creative and probing creatures who are coping, dealing, designating, dodging, maneuvering, scheming, striving, struggling and so forth" and meaning as "fragile and precarious and therefore treated gingerly by most people and defended when attacked."[1]

The struggle among Christians over homosexuality can be understood as a struggle about power, but it is also a struggle over meaning: the meaning of tradition, of the Bible, of community, of self, of sexuality. For example, Burgess (1999: 262) asserts that Presbyterians on different sides of the issue have "profoundly different understandings of sin and repentance, the interpretation of Scripture and the church's confessions, and the relationship of law and grace [with perhaps] the key theological [difference] the nature of the church and church unity." As another example, one point-counterpoint book on homosexuality in the Episcopal Church (Temple et al. 1998) is titled *Gospel Opportunity or Gospel Threat?* For Christians, any opportunity to spread the gospel is exceedingly welcome,

and any threat to the gospel is understood as a threat to Christianity itself. On the "opportunity" side, an inclusionist book written by a UM pastor (Waun 1999) claims that a fully welcoming UMC will best be able to continue its venerable tradition of evangelism wherever possible. Surely, Waun argues, LGBT people who have left the church in anger and in pain are perfect prospects if evangelized correctly. Hunter (1991: 194) presents a voice for those concerned with the "threat" when he notes that:

> orthodox-leaning renewal leaders and their followers in the mainline religious bodies (especially in Protestantism) view policy on homosexuality as the "watershed issue"—the issue over which they either stay within the mainline or leave. A tremendous amount of money, people, and resources, therefore, would likely disappear if homosexuality were sanctioned any more than it is.

Inclusionists and conservatives come to the struggle with deeply held, and deeply different, understandings of what it means to believe as they do. For inclusionists, full inclusion in the most technical sense would mean the end of any homosexuality-related prohibitions in the *Book of Discipline* as well as the removal of the incompatibility language that underlies and justifies the prohibitions. More broadly, full inclusion would signal a denominational taking up of Christ's message of welcome and the Bible's message of justice as inclusionists understand these. On a personal level, full inclusion would allow LGBT United Methodists to fulfill their calls from God to be pastors, and to have their deepest love relationships blessed in the church, the place where such a blessing would have the most meaning. Full inclusion would also allow inclusionists to begin the process of healing from years of anger, grief, depression and despair over the struggle's history to date. Finally, and perhaps most important, full inclusion would serve as the denomination's ultimate message to its LGBT members that they were completely equivalent to heterosexuals, and that their sexuality was not in any way a hindrance to being a good United Methodist, Christian or human being. The desire for inclusion is as simple, and as complicated, as it sounds. It is a matter of people who are deeply Christian, deeply UM, and deeply lesbian or gay, trying to hold these identities together in the face of the church's denial that this is possible and also in the context of a lifetime of devaluation from church and society. For inclusionists, full inclusion is thus a very high-stakes proposition.

The conservatives, in turn, work to hold the line on homosexuality because if they did not they would, in their understanding, be contributing to the demise of the church—also a very high-stakes proposition. Conservatives and evangelicals involved in the sexuality struggle genuinely believe that homosexuality is antithetical to, or in their own language, incompatible with, Christianity. Given this stance, they perceive it as their task to protect the church from any changes that would result in official

acceptance of homosexuality.[2] Both in their published writings and in their arguments at General Conference, conservatives and evangelicals repeatedly express deep worry that the slightest "give" in their position will lead to a slippery slope ending in denominational rejection of Biblical authority and dissolution of the boundaries that keep "the church" separate from "the world." Moreover, like all mainline denominations, UMs have been losing members for years; conservatives interpret this loss as a result of the denomination becoming less distinctive from "the world." With such a perspective, it is not surprising that conservatives resist all attempts to compromise on the incompatibility language and the prohibitions. For one thing, God's word is absolute and may not be "compromised on" in the conservative worldview; compromise is "of the world," not "of God." But at least as importantly, the very existence of the church is at stake for conservatives: in membership numbers, in distinctiveness, and in its commitment to doing God's will as conservatives understand this. Holding the line on homosexuality thus means, among other things, protecting the church from theological dissolution and worldly intrusion; venerating God; rejecting Satan's temptations; and stopping membership loss.

Therefore, while one may not agree that full inclusion of LGBT people will necessarily heal the church or inevitably destroy it, the role of meaning in raising the stakes is undeniable.

THE USE OF QUALITATIVE METHODS

Just as quantitative methods are preferable for studies focused on numerical social patterns, qualitative methods are ideal for studies concerned with meaning. The most sophisticated statistical tests cannot explain the complexities of why people feel as they do about various things, or how they make sense of the connections between their beliefs and their actions. In contrast, such methods as fieldwork and interviewing enable the researcher to interact with those being studied, to hear their perspectives, to watch them do things, and to ask them about the decisions they make. I used these two methods to collect information, supplementing it with extensive review of published materials.

REVIEW OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS

In keeping with its size and cultural importance in U.S. history, the United Methodist Church has published hundreds of books, denominational studies, magazines, and other print materials. I began by studying the denomination's history and location in the broader context of U.S. mainline religion, reading works by historians, theologians and sociologists. I reviewed relevant sections of the *Book of Discipline* and *Book of Resolutions*. Several denominational

studies of homosexuality[3] also proved useful, as did the published writing of caucus members on both sides of the subject.[4] I read current and historical issues of various church newsletters and journals, including the *Circuit Rider* (the denominational journal for pastors), *Christian Social Action* (the publication of the social justice-minded General Board of Church and Society), and newsletters and newspapers from several Annual Conferences.

The United Methodist Church has extensive archival and current information available on the internet, as do the various organizations on both sides of the inclusion struggle. I reviewed the United Methodist News Service's web page daily from 1998 through 2000 and read all documents related to homosexuality. I also accessed hundreds of documents written over several years from the UMC website. Additionally, I joined Affirmation's "Called Out" list-serve for several years, thus obtaining frequent updates about issues of importance to LGBT people of faith in United Methodism and other religious traditions. The list provided daily, automatic access to essentially every local, Annual Conference, Jurisdictional and denomination-wide piece of news about homosexuality. Finally, I read the web pages of the caucuses on both sides at least once a month.

I also purchased the Advance Edition of the *Daily Christian Advocate*, General Conference's daily newspaper. The Advance Edition is published before General Conference as the forum in which resolutions and proposed changes to the *Book of Discipline* are first made available to conference attendees. This resource provided me with access to all of the petitions, as well as contact information for every delegate. Descriptions of committee and plenary discussion rules were also provided in these documents, as was some statistical information about the denomination.

In addition to making use of books, articles and the internet, I spent several Sundays listening to broadcasts of Boston University's UM worship services. I also briefly interviewed a New England Annual Conference inclusionist pastor, and attended the service celebrating the decision of Boston's Union United Methodist Church to become a reconciling congregation.[5]

FIELDWORK

I attended General Conference 2000 from May 2nd through May 12th, 2000. From the 2nd through the 11th, I was onsite every day for almost the entire day with one exception. Most mornings I got up at 5 a.m. and began my public transportation commute at 6 a.m., as my host lived in an outlying neighborhood of Cleveland and I wanted to attend the conservative caucuses' 7 a.m. breakfast briefings. In perfect symmetry, the inclusionist caucuses met at night after the day's events were over. I generally attended all or part of those meetings, which ran until about midnight.

Initial decisions about whom and what to observe were not difficult, as most of the homosexuality-related action was in one place for the first few

days. I had schedules of events from both sides as well as a subscription to the onsite *Daily Christian Advocate*, which included a daily schedule of events and locations. Maximizing the fieldwork experience in my case involved being in certain places at certain times, such as the meetings of the committee handling most of the homosexuality-related petitions (the Faith and Order Committee), and the full-Conference plenary sessions when the relevant petitions were discussed. When those committee meetings and plenary sessions were not in process, the hospitality suites of the two caucus groups were good places to pick up literature and listen to conversations, and there were also rallies and press conferences to attend. At the end of each day, I used the *Daily Christian Advocate* and the multitude of caucus handouts to develop an extensive schedule of the following day's activities. While I could not attend every activity, I did obtain all of the relevant caucus handouts, and also went to the United Methodist News Service news desk daily to check for new announcements.

By the last few days, selecting a focus became difficult, partly due to exhaustion and partly because the homosexuality issue was now moving forward on multiple fronts. In general, I focused on those decisions, processes, interactions, and groups that were most closely related to my topic. I observed the processes by which caucuses attempted to influence delegates, followed the committees at work debating proposals, and witnessed the public debate on the plenary floor. I attended meetings of caucuses on both sides, though access difficulties with conservatives meant that I spent more time with inclusionists. I experienced a range of worship services (denominational worship on the opening day, worship at Good News breakfast briefings, a Reconciling Congregation Program multicultural lunchtime communion and communion at the RCP rally), taking part in some components of these services.[6] I also obtained a multitude of documents (books, handouts, newspapers, letters, cassettes and CDs) and artifacts (RCP clothing, pins, buttons, liturgical materials, stoles and crosses).

I was fortunate in terms of access to the field. General Conferences are open to the public and it is expected that some researchers will attend. As long as I wore my registration badge I could go wherever I wanted, with the exception of the plenary floor during debate and the closed strategy meetings of UM Decision 2000. In the absence of the responsibilities held by (for example) delegates, I was also able to move frequently between the convention center and the two hotels with the conservative and inclusionist hospitality suites.

I went into the field with the aim of doing only overt research and avoiding disguised observation. I was always honest about my project when asked, and frequently volunteered the information, especially before I asked people questions (Williamson et al. 1982: 200). There were, nonetheless, some limits to what I volunteered. I did not interrupt conversations going on around me to tell those conversing that I was listening to them. While I used my real name on my registration badge, I left it otherwise unadorned,

which meant that most people would have presumed me simply an interested UM. While I never lied, I did not tell anyone the extent of my interest or my theories, nor did I explicitly "come out" as an inclusionist until the day of the final votes when I wore the inclusionist stole mentioned in the Introduction.

The structure of General Conference allowed for informal conversations and casual questioning. In some cases, I asked inclusionists questions about proper behavior, such as how UMs take communion; more often I asked how they thought things were going. I asked this latter question to conservatives as well. My conversations with conservatives usually began with my telling them who I was and what I was studying. Those conservatives who were willing to talk with me tended to speak freely and at length.

I did not, however, have equal access to inclusionists and conservatives. I looked much more like an inclusionist than a conservative, and much more like a stereotypical lesbian inclusionist than a (thin, coiffed) heterosexual conservative. I was also far more at ease with "my people," and though I worked hard to overcome this, I was never fully able to do so; indeed, as the tension heated up, it became harder and harder for me to spend time with the conservatives. To share a breakfast table with someone who, the night before, had said that liberals were idolizing personal experience when they talked about LGBT UM pain was depressing and infuriating. Spending time with the former homosexuals also became increasingly difficult, which was unfortunate since we began with fairly good rapport.[7]

During the first week, I made a goal of spending equal amounts of time in the two hospitality suites. By the second week this was neither possible nor profitable. When I went into the conservatives' hospitality suite while people were talking informally, they dropped their voices and looked at me pointedly. The one time I inadvertently interrupted a meeting, I was told to leave. At the same time the inclusionists' suite came to feel more and more like a safe haven. I took breaks there, initiated data-gathering conversations with volunteers, and occasionally played the piano in the hotel lobby next to the hospitality suite. Beyond its restorative function, this activity led me into a surprising number of conversations with LGBT UMs who were also musicians and who tended to be theologically moderate or evangelical.

As an ex-United Methodist, my partner had provided me with substantial information about the UMC before I went to General Conference 2000; upon entering the field I was fortunate to find three key informants quickly. One was a United Methodist pastor and a social scientist, one of several that I met. I sought him out when I had technical or procedural questions, as well as for the occasional update when we were in different but equally interesting locations. The second informant was a retired United Methodist pastor. He had been monitoring Good News and the other conservative caucuses over many years, and was able to articulate certain inclusionist concerns about the conservative caucuses that I had not previously heard. He also taught me how to take communion UM style, and how to pass

the peace. Finally, a moderate-to-conservative pastor asked me how I was one morning at a Good News breakfast briefing; his question led to a conversation from which we struck up a friendship. My honesty in this first conversation would be richly rewarded when "Josh," months later, made a comment during a phone call that led me to many of the fundamental conclusions of this book.

I took notes and wrote down ideas everywhere: on public transportation, on park benches, at the convention center, in hotel lobbies, in both hospitality suites, at a nearby mall, in my room at night and in the morning. When engaged in conversations, I frequently wrote during the conversation after obtaining permission; by the second week, some of the inclusionists would gently poke fun at my ever-ready yellow legal pad.[8] My notes included factual information and observations, impressions, hunches, theoretical ideas, personal feelings, questions, reminders to myself about things to do after General Conference, and contact information for future interviewees. I also noted experiences of access success and failure, and sometimes commented on my strategies for collecting data. I always wrote down anything that struck me powerfully, whether it was an observation, an insight, or an emotional reaction. Over the 12 days, I took 150 pages of notes.

Both during and after General Conference, I used the *Daily Christian Advocate* (DCA), caucus handouts, media reporting, and internet material to supplement and check against my field notes. The DCA contained transcripts of conference proceedings, news stories and features related to General Conference, and summaries of legislative committee actions. Editions of the DCA were published daily throughout General Conference; a "roundup" edition was published following the final day. The DCA allowed me to review bishops' talks and sermons that I had not seen in person, to monitor the outcome of committee and plenary activity that I missed, and to check against my own notes on homosexuality-related activity on the plenary floor, since I was anxious and upset on the day of the final votes.

INTENSIVE INTERVIEWING

Once at General Conference, I learned that I could only gain access to the conservatives through telephone interviews. I also found the annoyance of the General Conference moderates with the inclusionists (but not, apparently, with the conservatives) fascinating, and decided to speak with more moderates. While I had spoken with inclusionists at General Conference, I wanted more focused time with them in order to pursue questions of power and inequality. Following General Conference, therefore, I carried out intensive interviews with people representing all three perspectives. I eventually completed 46 interviews with 44 people over the course of almost a year, including four interviews with one person and a combined interview with two people. Thirty-two interviewees were male and 12 were female;

22 were inclusionists, ten were moderates and 12 were conservatives. The interviews with inclusionists were largely intended to help me find moderate interviewees. All respondents lived in the United States. The greatest number of interviewees came from the Northeastern Jurisdiction (16), followed by the North Central and Southeastern Jurisdictions (nine each), the South Central Jurisdiction (six), and the Western Jurisdiction (four).

I used purposive sampling to obtain respondents (Williamson et al. 1982: 105–107). I knew that I wanted to speak with delegates and caucus members, and that I wanted to make sure to speak with conservatives, moderates and inclusionists. In some cases, delegates and caucus members at General Conference agreed to post-meeting interviews. Most others that I interviewed were delegates that I identified while at General Conference but with whom I did not interact there. Once the interviews were underway, I used snowball sampling to obtain more interviewees. With two exceptions (a moderate and a conservative), everyone I contacted agreed to speak with me.

Almost all post-General Conference interviews took place over the phone, and involved a first phone call to set up the interview and a second phone call for the interview itself. Most interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the interviewee, using a device that plugged directly into a phone system. The interviews began with an introduction modeled on a standard consent form,[9] after which interviewees had to agree on tape that they were still willing to participate. At the end of the interview, I asked each person whether they had said anything that they didn't want used, and I honored the few interviewees who had such requests. When an interviewee wanted to know my personal opinion on the issues we were discussing, I asked whether we could address that after the formal interview, which was always acceptable to them. No moderate or conservative respondents (other than two former homosexuals I interviewed at General Conference) asked about my sexual orientation, and I did not volunteer it.

I designed the interview questions and carried out the interviews with the goal of maximizing flexibility.[10] The questions were open-ended in nature, designed to allow for probing or for a temporary change in the direction of the interview if either seemed productive. Some questions were asked of all respondents, others of only certain respondents, and in some cases, I changed the order of the questions, added new questions, or deleted questions that interviewees had answered spontaneously. Overall, the interviews ran from half an hour to over two hours, with most averaging approximately one hour. With the exception of one conservative caucus leader, I feel that I developed good rapport with the respondents and obtained an accurate sense of how they felt about issues related to homosexuality and the church.

I took several steps to assure confidentiality for interviewees. First, I developed pseudonyms for each individual. Second, I made a point of not speaking the individual's real name during the interview if it was being recorded.

Third, I labeled the cassette tapes with interview dates only, rather than with names or other information. Finally, in the few cases where interviewees expressed concern about confidentiality during recorded interviews, I destroyed the tapes as soon as they were transcribed; no names or identifying information (other than a pseudonym and "conservative delegate" (for example)) appeared on transcripts.

ANALYSIS

I drew on an analytic approach modified from Witten (1993) to make sense of my field notes, interview transcripts and background writings.[11] Because I went into the study with certain topics and questions in mind, I let these topics and questions inform my reading while also seeking to allow other concepts and categories to emerge organically as I looked for major patterns in the data. I went over the materials multiple times in search of key words, phrases or themes that occurred frequently or that received emphatic treatment.

I also sought to understand what Gamson and Lasch (1983: 400) call "appeals to principle," the moral claims justifying each side's framing of their position. Including appeals to principle in my analysis seemed important, given that I was primarily concerned with the meaning of the issue to those with whom I interacted (or whose work I read). As it turned out, moral claims were the perfect venue for understanding where and how the inclusionists and evangelicals spoke in different languages. As noted in Chapter One, inclusionist appeals to principle were mostly based on language that one normally expects to see in the political sphere: justice, fairness, equality, first-class citizenship, ending discrimination, homophobia and heterosexism, and the right of pastors to bless couples in their congregations or of LGBT people to be pastors. In contrast, conservative appeals to principle used language that most people would identify as classically Christian: Scripture/the Bible, Christian tradition, Wesleyanism, holiness, perfection, morality, sustaining the Church, and doctrinal integrity. These differing languages turned out to be only one element of a larger clash between democratic and religious institutional logics, a clash in which cultural values, structural inequality, and deep-seated emotions were all implicated.

ETHNOGRAPHY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS

While sociology may be a single disciplinary "game," qualitative research and quantitative research represent different ways to play it. It does no justice to either type of research to force both to conform to the same criteria for effectiveness. Therefore, while I was mindful of reliability,

validity and other such standards, I addressed them in ways appropriate to qualitative research.

Generalizability: In quantitative sociology, findings can be generalized to a larger population when the techniques used for obtaining the sample meet certain standards. In contrast, fieldwork is of necessity focused on a relatively small group of people who cannot be proven to be representative of a larger population (unless they themselves are the entire group of interest). In this sense, my findings cannot be generalized beyond the specific UMs whom I studied. However, information about other mainline Christian sexuality struggles, some of which is presented in this book, suggests certain commonalities across the struggles. This, in turn, means that partial and preliminary generalization beyond the UMC might be possible. As to how representative the UMC and the Protestant mainline denominations are of the United States as a whole, I noted some cultural affinities in Chapter Two and present supporting poll data in Chapter Nine. This exploratory comparison of church and country does not allow for real generalization, but it does open up the question for future researchers.

Reliability: The nature of my data and the way I collected it suggest that classical reliability (replicability of a study by other researchers over time) may not be demonstrable in this study.[12] First, the inevitability of researcher reactivity and the importance of social location make it highly unlikely that someone else would carry out this project so as to replicate exactly the results I obtained. When one commits to doing qualitative research, one also commits to taking one's hunches seriously. A different researcher with different hunches would ask different questions and, therefore, obtain different answers, even if the differences turned out to be minimal. Moreover, I agree with Lincoln and Guba (1985: 299) that "one can never cross the same stream twice." Erikson (1970) suggests that sociologists' relentless focus on social patterns has made it difficult for us to grasp the dynamic nature of reality, a claim with which I also agree. Such a position makes it hard to believe that a study of this sort could really be replicated precisely by someone else at a different time.

Validity: Qualitative researchers need to be most concerned with what Johnson (1997: 282) has called descriptive validity (the "factual accuracy of the account as reported by the qualitative researcher"), interpretive validity (the extent to which "the participants' viewpoints, thoughts, intentions, and experiences are accurately understood and reported by the qualitative researcher"), and theoretical validity (the extent to which "a theory or theoretical explanation developed from a research study fits the data and is, therefore, credible and defensible"). I addressed these types of validity in three ways: triangulation, presentation of raw data, and what Lincoln and Guba (1985: 313–316) describe as "member checks."

Triangulation can refer to the use of multiple research methods in a single study, the collection of data from multiple sources, or the consideration of multiple theories in making sense of the data.[13] I used all three kinds of

triangulation in this study with the goal of attaining the greatest possible degree of validity. Fieldwork, interviews and review of published materials represent three different research methods. The hundreds of documents I analyzed, which were drawn from a wide range of sources and several different media (text, videos, tape and CD recordings) represent data triangulation. Finally, the fact that I applied three forms of conflict theory and a neo-institutional analysis to my materials arguably makes it more likely that the results have good theoretical validity.

Witten (1993: 17) notes that she "reproduce[s] verbatim the sermon excerpts on which [her] analyses depend, so the reader may assess the adequacy of [her] interpretations." Similarly, I included as much of the relevant raw data as possible in this book in order to allow for scrutiny of my analysis.

Finally, I followed Lincoln and Guba's suggestion about "member checks." I did so by (a) frequently asking respondents to confirm or clarify a point (usually by reading it back to them during the interview), and (b) arranging interviews with several respondents specifically to ask them about the credibility of my analysis. Because I knew that the concept of contradictory institutional logics might not be immediately intuitive to all of my respondents, I selected a subgroup of four respondents (two inclusionists, a moderate and a conservative, all clergy), emailed them a description of the concept and my argument, and arranged phone interviews in which we focused specifically on this topic. Three of the four found that the concept made sense and that the analysis was helpful; one of the inclusionists struggled with the validity of the argument but he made it clear that he was struggling because he was a long-time activist and was uncomfortable with the possibility that denominational resistance might occur on this basis (rather than on the more straightforward basis of "the church being homophobic").

BIAS

Becker (1967: 245) observes that "there is no position from which sociological research can be done that is not biased in one or another way. . . . we can never avoid taking sides." As noted in the Introduction, I carried out my research having already personally taken sides. At the same time, because I share with Jorgensen (1989: 26) "the goal of accurate and truthful findings," I took particular steps to guard against the possibility that my biases would unduly or unknowingly influence my results. First, I tried to be explicit about both my social location and the "biases and assumptions"[14] that went with it throughout the research process. As Jorgensen (ibid., 27) observes, it is not possible to eradicate one's biases but it is possible to be aware of how one's perspective may be influencing one's research. I sought constantly to be mindful of how my biography was impacting my

analysis. Second, I followed standard practices aimed at minimizing bias, such as "solicit[ing] the views of all, not only those with whom [I agreed]" and "using a number of sources [to] verify the information [I received]."[15] What I most hope for regarding my analysis is that it is even-handed; this is what Ammerman (1990: xii) hoped for, even as she made her position on one side of the "Baptist battles" clear. Like Ammerman, I am surely on one side of the UMC homosexuality struggle; if I have done my job right, the work is, nonetheless, even-handed.[16]

That I have succeeded at least partially in my goal of even-handedness is confirmed, ironically, by how personally disappointing the results were. Becker (1967: 246) observes that "by using our theories and techniques impartially, we ought to be able to . . . get all the facts we require, even though . . . some of the facts that will be produced run counter to our biases." Indeed, my findings were exactly the opposite of what I had hoped, which was that LGBT UMs would be fully included in the life and work of the church before long. Instead, if my analysis is correct and denominational circumstances do not change soon, LGBT UMs and their allies can expect a substantial wait on the legislative front. At least I can take minor methodological comfort in the fact that I was diligent in following my leads, even when they took me places I did not want to go.

AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY?

While virtually all ethnography has an autobiographical element to it, qualitative researchers disagree on how extensive that element should be. In recent years, some ethnographers have developed the claim that, for ethical and methodological reasons, ethnographies should focus substantially on the researcher's self and experiences in relation with others, rather than primarily on the "others" being studied; such research has come to be called "autoethnography."[17] In addition to differing on the merits and limits of autoethnography, qualitative researchers are divided on what exactly constitutes an autoethnography. A maximizing approach treats most qualitative projects as autoethnographies as long as they "make problematic" in research those issues that are "problematic in our lives."[18] A minimizing approach reserves the term for "evocative" ethnographies grounded in postmodernism. Evocative ethnographies reject social scientific analysis and theory-building in favor of literary and therapeutic values.[19]

Because I took my experiences and feelings very seriously during my fieldwork, it is reasonable to ask whether this project should be considered an autoethnography, and if not, where it stands in relation to such research. The remainder of the chapter addresses these questions.

Table 3.1 presents selected aspects of qualitative research as they might be envisioned by a stereotypical "realist social science researcher" and an ideal-type "evocative autoethnographer,"[20] followed by my best assessment

of where the research reported in this book lies. The first part of the table focuses on areas where my work falls closest to realism. The rest of the table shows research categories where I have carved out a space between the two approaches.

Table 3.1 Selected Aspects of Qualitative Research from Different Perspectives

Research Aspect	*Evocative Autoethnography*	*Realist Social Science Research*	*My Work*
Truth	Narrative	Literal	Literal
Discipline	Literature	Social science	Social science
Trust in social science?	No; it's too problematic	Yes; it's our discipline	Yes, but proceed with caution
Goals of research	Therapy; self-transformation	Theory; knowledge production	Theory; personal growth a side effect
"Analysis"	Creative interpretation	Systematization	Systematization
Experience in the field	Central to analysis	Illuminates others' social processes	Illuminates others' social processes
Focus	Researcher's personal experience	What others say and do	Mostly what others do and say
Who is studied	Researcher and others in relation ("us")	Others ("them")	Primarily others; researcher included
Experience prior to entering field	Shades into field experience; stay focused on it	Inspires research topic; start from it and move on	Can't ignore it completely but don't stop there
Researcher's self-consciousness	Front and center	Implied but invisible	Present but never the whole story
Relationship to "reality"	Cope with reality and create useful new realities	Describe reality; find/uncover what's there now	Find what's there so people can create and learn to cope
The research encounter	Befriend participants	Study subjects	Engage with/strive to understand people
Researcher's authority	Frail human being; no special authority	Authority as trained social scientist	Frail human being with authority
Emotions	Expressed	Excluded	Informative
Passion	Sought after	Complicating	Welcomed
Vulnerability	Crucial	Unscientific	Inevitable and useful

Sources: Ellis 2004; Ellis and Bochner 2000; Goodall 2000: 72; Goode 2006; Van Maanen 1988

The research described in this book falls closest to realist social science research in its acceptance of certain foundational claims. For example, while familiar with postmodernist assertions about the nature of reality, I carried out my research convinced that social situations could be described "truthfully" even if they were socially constructed. For all of sociology's limits, it is the discipline I espoused, and in keeping with my rejection of postmodernism I did not experience social science as irredeemably flawed. Similarly, the point of fieldwork as I saw it was to further understanding of social patterns, particularly those concerned with human meaning, thus my support for systematic analysis in the service of theory-building.

Evocative autoethnographers and realist social scientists differ substantially in how to balance the place of researcher and researched in fieldwork. Here, too, I leaned toward the realist position. I did not ignore the autobiographical element of my fieldwork, and mined it for useful information. At the same time, I agree with Atkinson (2006: 403) that other people "remain infinitely more interesting and sociologically significant than the majority of sociologists who document their own experiences rather than analyzing social action and social organization." I presumed that researchers' field experiences should illuminate others' social processes rather than distracting from them. Like all ethnographers, I went into the field with past experiences in mind, but also encountered the field as the source of new experiences and new understandings. While I cannot imagine having been the "narrator from nowhere" in this study, I hope that my own consciousness does not take up too much space in the end (with the exception of this methodological chapter, where the convention is to describe one's research experiences in the first person.)

I opted for a both/and rather than either/or approach to fieldwork in some areas. For example, my goal in seeking to make new sense of reality was, at least in part, to contribute to justice for LGBT people. While those I studied may be better understood as subjects than as participants, I experienced them as human beings with whom I made personal connections, and who I worked to understand in hopes that understanding them would contribute to more general understandings. I was often aware of myself as both a sociologically trained observer and a limited and fragile person during fieldwork, and appreciate the importance of acknowledging both truths.

Evocative autoethnographers and realist social scientists are stereotypically thought to have different reactions to the value and importance of emotions, passion and vulnerability in the field, with the first group seeking them out and the second group regarding them with suspicion. In my fieldwork, I found emotions, passion and vulnerability both unavoidable and significantly helpful if often unpleasant.[21] I experienced intense mood swings at General Conference and learned just how much internalized homophobia I had left. At the first communion service, I must have looked puzzled as the communion bread and cup reached me because an inclusionist sitting next to me leaned over and said, "this means God loves you" as he passed me the elements. I broke into deep sobs instantly, and cried every

other time I took the bread and cup during the fieldwork. Reflecting on this experience led me to the uncomfortable conclusion that, somewhere out of sight of my intellect, I had believed that "God" did not love me because of my sexuality. "Lewis's" comment both broke open this buried fear and somehow broke through it for a moment. Were I a United Methodist, I would explain the emotional response by saying that God's grace had touched me. As a sociologist, I can appeal to Durkheim's (1995) insights about the trans-rational power of ritual. Beyond that, I have no good explanation for those experiences.

Jorgensen claims that "by doing something myself, I was able actually to *feel* it from the standpoint of an insider. Emotions and feelings otherwise are extremely difficult to investigate. Personal experience thereby is a principal way of gaining access to this absolutely crucial aspect of human existence."[22] When I went to Cleveland, I expected to be more an outsider than an insider, and was unprepared for the extent to which my life was implicated. Neither UM nor Christian, I nonetheless found myself identifying deeply with the LGBT United Methodists. This identification gave me access to a wide range of experiences and feelings that were helpful in my analysis of the situation. For example, it was clear that the conservatives did not grasp the extent to which their claims were experienced by LGBT UMs as an attack on their deepest and most basic sense of self; it was another thing entirely to feel shamed and devalued routinely along with the LGBT UMs, and to know that those responsible did not feel the least bit at fault.

My sense of identification with the LGBT United Methodists was heightened on the day of the final votes, when I wore a clergy stole in solidarity with them. At that point, I also understood viscerally exactly why the inclusionists had shut down General Conference, knowledge that I would need to have at hand when considering conservative and moderate frustration with the "political homosexuals."

Ultimately, most self-defined autoethnographers would not consider this study an autoethnography, and in keeping with a minimizing approach, I agree with them. Because the research presented here drew eclectically from different positions on the continuum between evocative autoethnography and realist social science, I hesitate to categorize it, other than to say that it blends autobiography and traditional ethnography to some degree.

Finally, the study suggests both the value and the challenge of studying social inequality from such a complicated location. Every time I read a document claiming that homosexuality was the "line-in-the-sand" issue for the church or heard someone tell me that it was not possible to be a "gay Christian," I had to integrate my personal anger and sadness with my analytic fascination. Many UMs indicated that they saw rejection of homosexuality as bound up with the most basic definition of what it meant to be the United Methodist Church; I could not have wished for clearer confirmation of homophobia, heterosexism and contradictory institutional

logics in the UMC. And yet, as glad as I was to have my theories supported, I would have been gladder still to have them completely refuted for lack of evidence.

A commitment to the study of meaning, and thus to qualitative research, led me to this conclusion: the exhilaration of making sense of the struggle would not be possible without the agony of praying alongside dozens of sobbing LGBT United Methodists at the post-vote worship service, or without the rage at hearing oneself described as "yucky." It is to these experiences that I now turn in Chapter Four, where selected field notes from General Conference 2000 are presented.

4 General Conference 2000
Selected Field Notes

> When we arrived in Dallas, our plan was to observe the cultural, ideological and organizational dimensions of this monumental controversy. We wanted to hear how both elites and ordinary folk described what was at stake, and see what they were willing to do about it. We wanted to discover how people on the two sides were different from each other, both in ideas and background, in values and style of life. We also wanted to observe the organizational strategy each side was adopting as a way to reach its goals. In short, we wanted to know why Baptists were fighting.
>
> (Ammerman 1990: 7)

In this quote, sociologist Nancy Ammerman describes her thoughts as she prepared to begin a field study of the conservative-moderate struggle for control of the Southern Baptist Convention. Similarly, I went to Cleveland for General Conference because I wanted to comprehend more deeply why United Methodists were fighting over LGBT inclusion. I thought fieldwork would help me understand what was at stake, how the two sides differed, and how their strategies and tactics played out. In this chapter, I report selected vignettes from the field. They are in chronological order, but do not necessarily represent continuous experience. Rather, they are the moments that were most powerful at the time, and that ultimately provided particularly useful data.[1]

MAY 1, 2000

The sky is threatening rain as I walk through the airport looking for my ride to the Cleveland convention center. Soon I see people with shirts bearing the UMC "cross and flame" logo. An older man from a region known to be conservative on sexuality rides in the car with me. I am surprised to see him wearing a cross and flame pin with a pink triangle, an inclusionist variation on the UM symbol. I can't resist looking pointedly at the pin and smiling just a bit; I feel safer with a fellow traveler at the start of the experience.

The convention center is mostly underground, accessible by descending a ramp. Huge posters advertising General Conference hang high above the lobby area. They show a pointillist Jesus under which the slogan of the assembly reads: "We who are many are one body." The lobby is filled with small tables piled with little baggies; each baggie contains two homemade cookies or brownies and a piece of paper with a biblical quote. Escalators above the lobby and meeting rooms lead to a huge auditorium with a balcony overlooking it. This auditorium is where full-community worship will be held, and also where the plenary sessions will take place after the different committees have finished their work. During the plenary sessions, only delegates and bishops will be allowed on the auditorium floor; others will fill the balcony above. Closed-circuit televisions in the lobby allow people to watch the activities from outside the auditorium.

I head out into a downpour for a vigil held by Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). The vigil only has about 25 people present, but three news stations are covering it. A guitarist is playing "Teach Your Children Well" under a tarp. As it turns out, he has a lesbian sister. Several people from PFLAG speak. The love of the parents for "our gay children" is mentioned over and over again, as though it is a talisman that will protect inclusionists from a potentially negative voting outcome. One of the parents has lost her son to suicide. We sing "Down by the Riverside" under black skies as the three news crews pack up and leave.

An inclusionist is wearing a button reading "WWJD," short for "What would Jesus do?" This phrase is usually associated with evangelical Christians. The inclusionist tells me she does not want conservatives to co-opt the language and steal it from liberals.

MAY 2, 2000

The Methodist Federation for Social Action is holding a "Cleansing of the Temple" at the convention center before General Conference starts. A solemn circle gathers in front of the auditorium. We call out answers to the question of what keeps the church at odds with itself. Fear, ignorance, prejudice, and homophobia are some of the responses. People add more: arrogance, judgmentalism, internalized homophobia and false piety. As far as I can tell, this ritual is not supposed to be specific to sexuality, but that is clearly the primary issue on many minds. After our litany, we go through the convention center chanting "a house of prayer for all people" and making gestures of blessing. We meet, end with another litany, and sing "We Shall Overcome" without accompaniment, the sound echoing through the cavernous space.

The conservatives' hospitality suite is at a nearby hotel. Tables contain pamphlets, displays and handouts. These include *Good News* magazine, a glossy, high-quality publication with articles on spirituality, the state of

the denomination, and other topics of concern to evangelicals. Several copies of a book by a Good News leader await purchase. Materials of the organization's right-to-life group are across from transformational ministry information. UM Decision 2000 offers handouts detailing the three key homosexuality-related goals of the conservatives. The goals are to (1) "hold the line" on the *Book of Discipline* homosexuality-related passages, (2) make bishops more accountable when pastors in their Annual Conferences take "pro-homosexuality" stands that break the law of the *Discipline*,[2] and (3) provide an amicable way for congregations that cannot abide by the rules to leave the denomination. This last goal is aimed at liberals, and is intended to provide a carrot to go with the stick that the evangelicals will wield if they succeed in "holding the line."

UM Decision 2000, a coalition of all the conservative caucuses, is sponsoring a delegate orientation. Early on in the orientation, during a tactical discussion, Good News mentions its strategy of getting an evangelical elected president and secretary of each committee. Apparently, that way they have a greater chance of influencing the outcome by approving petitions of which they are supportive and killing petitions they don't like.

The gathering divides up into small groups of delegates, organized by committee. One of the men is holding a list of Faith and Order Committee delegates thought to be friendly to UM Decision 2000's agenda. Since this committee has been assigned most of the homosexuality-related petitions, I will be following it. A glance at the list suggests that there are more than enough conservative delegates to hold the line on homosexuality.

The large group reassembles to hear about the kind of support that UM Decision 2000 will be providing for the delegates. Leaders announce that there are 77 caucus members at General Conference. Each committee will have one or more conservative observers. UM Decision 2000 people will create new proposal amendments as needed while the committees are in session. Observers will also go out and get meals for delegates stuck in committee meetings, and will provide other kinds of assistance as well.

An evangelical pastor from California tells the group that there is discouragement over how liberal the UMC is in his state. Evangelicals have found themselves uncomfortably surrounded by bishops and others who, by word and deed, have abrogated the *Book of Discipline*. Indeed, some out there have continued to bless what the United Methodist Church cannot condone (presumably meaning holy unions), so evangelicals are trying to form a separate group in order to, as "Charles" puts it, stay in the United Methodist Church. To great laughs, he says that California is a bowl of granola, made up of fruits, nuts, and flakes, whom he contrasts with the faithful. I pray that my shame and anger at hearing this is not visible to anyone around me.

After the meeting breaks up, one evangelical woman comments to another that so much politicking gets done even before the action starts.

I leave the conservatives' hospitality suite and go over to the convention center, where General Conference will be officially starting soon. When I

get there, I see two inclusionist pastors having a conversation. One notes the claim of a California evangelical that 30 percent of congregations in his Annual Conference are gay-affirming. Clearly, this pastor says, the denomination is not of one mind on this issue and even the evangelicals admit it. Hopefully the loving middle among the delegates will see this. The other pastor says he hopes that the loving middle will repudiate legalism.

During the opening worship the bishop preaching says that there is never a time for drawing a line in the sand. We must remember, he says, that if Jesus drew in the sand, it would not be a line but a circle. While the bishop does not mention homosexuality explicitly, I recall UM Decision 2000's desire to "hold the line" and suspect homosexuality might be on the bishop's mind.

MAY 3, 2000

The results of the committee elections are announced at the daily UM Decision 2000 breakfast briefing. The conservatives appear to have done well in the elections, as many chairs and vice-chairs are conservative. In the committee that I am following, Faith and Order, the chair and vice-chair are conservative, and the secretary is an inclusionist. Conservative caucus leaders say that this is the first time the various conservative groups have tried to pull together a coalition in order to get their people elected to committee leadership, and that they elected 17 people out of the 30 positions, with 13 positions going to the other side.

"Harlan," a caucus leader, says that the delegates need to set the pace, and must not allow professional demonstrators (presumably Soulforce) to set the pace or dictate the agenda. Harlan says that he has lots of ideas for procedural motions, and that he won't strong-arm General Conference but will speed the agenda along. My interpretation of this is that Harlan has just managed to characterize the inclusionists as political by virtue of their association with Soulforce, suggest that the delegates must eschew politics, and openly articulate how political UM Decision 2000 really is.

A small group of UM Decision 2000 people has assembled outside the convention center. Among them are some former homosexuals, holding a large sign that says, "Sometimes Love Says No." The sign is clever; it shifts attention away from the inclusionist claim that the current position of the church is hateful, and also implies that God is a wise Father chastising disobedient (inclusionist) children.

An inclusionist pastor tells me that his Annual Conference elected conservative delegates because Good News was more organized than AMAR. He says that organizing the Annual Conferences is a big deal, and that the majority of United Methodists are still culturally conservative, especially when it comes to homosexuality.

An African bishop giving the daily episcopal sermon names the indecent, unbiblical practice of homosexuality as a challenge to the exercise of Christian authority. He says, among other things, that nature itself abhors "homosexualism" and that these practices are not even easily mentioned among unbelievers. He quotes the Bible and the *Book of Discipline* and says that to allow self-avowed practicing homosexuals to be pastors is to contravene the faith we claim to live. If there is more, I don't hear it. I am flushed, agitated as though I had somehow been found out despite the fact that I am alone watching the sermon in the lobby. I can't imagine how painful the experience must be for the LGBT UMs inside the auditorium.

The convention center is packed with people wearing stickers or buttons advertising one or the other position on homosexuality. Even the UM Decision 2000 people wear stickers. I notice that the conservatives' stickers are simple and rectangular, a far cry from the profusion of rainbow ribbons, pink triangle buttons, and heavily adorned conference badges among the inclusionists. Only the delegates seem paraphernalia-free at this point.

At the AMAR hospitality suite there are dozens of beautiful clergy stoles on the wall, courtesy of the Shower of Stoles Project.[3] They are extraordinarily colorful, made of many materials and with a variety of symbols (particularly crosses, the United Methodist cross and flame, rainbows, and doves). One rainbow stole is in honor of a baby denied baptism because the congregation decided that his two lesbian mothers could not provide a Christian home for him. A purple stole offers thanks to God for putting lesbians on Noah's Ark.

At an AMAR press conference, a pastor says that the central message of AMAR is that the denomination should extend the message of God's love to all God's children, including LGBT children. These are not single-issue people, he stresses, but people who care about a range of justice issues and evangelization. The group begins with a prayer to "gracious God, whose name is Justice," offering thanks for the United Methodist Church, "a place that has taught us to love one another as God has first loved us." Thanks are offered for families, for those who work with words and with the Word. The group holds in prayer "the General Conference, the bishops and other leaders, and especially the delegates," and asks for God's blessings as they strive to serve the church.

During the AMAR evening debriefing, reports come in about the state of things in each committee. The news is mixed, with some committees faring better than others from the inclusionist perspective. After tallying up the evening reports, it seems that the evangelical aim of "holding the line" will be easily met, with (for example) the prohibition on funding programs supportive of homosexuality kept in by a vote of 78 percent to 22 percent. Moreover, the Faith and Order observers say that the inclusionists on the committee simply don't have the vote. A groan goes up in the room. Announcements include mention that the daily Reconciling Congregation Program communion started yesterday, with the numbers tripling today.

Apparently a UM bishop preaches at this lunchtime worship service, followed by open communion. I am profoundly touched by the presence of episcopal support for these beleaguered people, with whom I feel increasing amounts of empathy.

MAY 4, 2000

Several LGBT people from AMAR join me at a Transforming Congregations press conference. There are three self-identified former homosexuals talking as we arrive, two women and a man. They use a lot of psychological language, and offer the usual confessional testimony, tailored to induce just that nagging sense of doubt in any LGBT people present. The speakers quote frequently from the Bible. A woman in the audience says, in a voice low with loathing and disgust, "We have a friend's son who's a *homo*. How do we approach that?" The male speaker, "William," talks about how sin is a matter of missing the mark. "Al," one of the gay men who came over with me, asks about legislation related to this issue, and William says it's a matter of doctrinal purity. The two get testy and face off.

A female pastor who walked over with us gets into the fray with a story of a lesbian couple she knows, who heard from God that their lesbianism was blessed. William says that Methodists cannot honor such an approach, that you're free but it's a sin, and it's not allowed in the Bible. He didn't write the book, he just obeys it. It's a purity issue. Don't be a victim, he says, be free, and go to a church where they embrace you. "Janet" replies that this is our church. William says that the freedom to be gay is a pseudo-freedom, that they haven't been where he is, and that he's in a better space than them. He refers to the United Methodist Church as "the Christian church." William says that he walked through the Shower of Stoles display and really heard the rejection there. We're not about hate or condemnation, and we're not Bible-bangers, he says. I wonder why he feels the need to make this last point since his position is clearly based on biblical passages understood to condemn homosexuality. William asks why lesbians and gays would want to stay in a church that condemns them. Janet says, more fervently, that this is our church, that the church is democratic and that we can change it. William replies that the church is a theocracy. This exchange goes back and forth for some time and he asks her, can we be in the same church? Not only are we not of one mind, our whole lives are different.

Harlan is now talking politely to the LGBT folks who came over with me. His manner is calm, respectful and polite, compared to their evident anger. Harlan states clearly what he calls the conflictual nature of this process. If our side wins, your side will come back in 2004, and if your side wins, our side will come back in 2004, Harlan tells us all. Apparently, none of this is a secret, or even a controversial proposition. Harlan is quiet, purring, soothing, while the others have clenched fists and red faces, and

not enough power to effect any real change in the situation. Almost as an afterthought, Harlan mentions the lesbians and gay men in his congregation, and smiles impishly at what must be the shock on my face. Yes, he says to my unasked question, there are openly gay and lesbian members of the church he pastors. He adds that he treats them as they deserve to be treated, as full members of the congregation. I don't ask him what he would do if a same-sex couple requested a holy union.

Some AMAR people stand outside the convention center in such a way that the delegates will have to see them as they enter or leave, and begin chanting, "See our people." They are wearing Stoles Project stoles, some of which include biblical quotes such as Romans 8: 39 and Micah 6: 6–8.[4] Delegates walk past the protest, ignoring it, not meeting the protesters' eyes. The chant has shifted: "Know your people. Know your people. Know your people. These are good people of faith and hope who love the church." In my mind I hear the conservative response: yes, of course they are, we all are, but it's a sin because the Bible says it is. The AMAR people seem quite pained, the delegates slightly irritated.

Several dozen AMAR people troop into the hospitality suite for a meeting. They begin with worship, offering up a four-part harmony a cappella rendition of "Surely the Presence of the Lord is in this Place." Their eyes are closed; they look ecstatic. The singing is gentle, soulful. A strategy meeting begins. One woman, speaking of the stoles display and protests, says that the gospel is being proclaimed all week. Someone says that a rumor is spreading of violent disruption of committee meetings. This, someone else says, is a Good News lie. Any presence among the delegates on AMAR's part will be nonviolent and non-disruptive. The delegates need a loving word. Someone says that volunteers are being assigned to delegates on a one-to-one basis, in order to witness more effectively. Another organizer says that we're not talking about theoretical differences of opinion; we're talking about real human beings. The conservative delegates have read the resources, the organizer tells those in the room, but they don't know *you*.

MAY 5, 2000

"Pat," a closeted bisexual, tells me that Wesley was a social activist, that the conservative movement is based on fear, and that when conservative groups get involved with virtually any cause within the church, they take over, because it's their way or no way. Pat draws a connection between the previous night's service repenting for racism and the topic of homophobia, saying that the conservatives can't really be repenting for racism if they can't apply the concept to other groups of people.

I ask a well-known evangelical about homosexuality. He says the current *Discipline* is scriptural, and it's necessary to be compassionate with those who don't agree but also to maintain the current order. Delegates

are heading toward their meeting rooms. An inclusionist delegate strolls toward the Faith and Order committee room, sardonically singing "Shall We Gather at the River."

Another Faith and Order inclusionist wearing sackcloth[5] and a button handed out at the racism repentance service says he thinks the committee is 60–40 conservatives, they have the votes, but the plenary floor will still get to hear the liberal side. He says that God is inclusive and we just have to catch up with Him or Her. He observes that it took 200 years to reach a point where the church could carry out a service of racial reconciliation, and hopes that in 20 years they will be wearing sackcloth and a pink triangle.

Someone tells me about a new AMAR protest being prepared, involving blue foam-board silhouettes that represent people who have been killed or have killed themselves over their homosexuality. Each silhouette has a story of the represented person's life and death pinned to it. I read the stories. They are horrifying. Also included are statistics about the brutality of attacks on gay men, which frequently involve torture, mutilation, cutting and beating, and show intent to destroy the person entirely. The display is called "Silenced Witnesses."

The protesters carry the foam-board silhouettes to their usual witness site overlooking the entrance to the convention center. They begin chanting their "see your people, know your people" litany. One protester, holding a silhouette of a gay man who was murdered, has added a personal sign underneath the story. His sign reads, "Am I next?" By now I'm quite sure that the evangelicals would say that they are welcoming and reconciling, and would simply mean it in a different way than the inclusionists. The former homosexuals see the protest, come over, and read the signs. William speaks with Al. After he leaves, I ask Al what William said. He shrugs and says that William told him he was brave.

An older man in a wheelchair is wishing the delegates peace as they enter the convention center. He holds a large sign, which I identify as having come from the inclusionist presence at the 1996 General Conference. It reads, "Help open our church doors. God's family has no second-class citizens. Too many churches still send this message: you are not welcome here. Join the reconcilers."

There's something slightly horrific in watching this all play out, knowing what is likely and hoping—praying—for a miracle.

MAY 6, 2000

A former lesbian is among the speakers at the UM Decision 2000 breakfast briefing. She says that the issue is not homosexuality but the inerrancy of Scripture, and receives a roomful of applause. Soon after, at the Parents' Reconciling Network breakfast, I hear an activist pastor say that the best thing parents of LGBT kids can do is tell their stories.

During my daily visit to the press room, I notice that the announcements table holds 16 flyers, 12 of which are related in some way to homosexuality.

"George," a gay pastor, tells me that lots of the gay pastors and laity are theologically conservative, more so than the heterosexual MFSA folks. I find it so ironic. If not for the matter of sexuality, the evangelicals might find at least some LGBT UMs good company.

A woman is on the phone at the UM Decision 2000 hospitality suite, and since she doesn't notice me I listen in. She's reading a list of prayers to someone handling a prayer vigil, and on the list is the following item: the homosexuals are having a rally today and they're surrounding the building and we just don't want it to get out of hand. After another exchange or two, she says (presumably of the homosexuals), they just need to see the light of Christ.

I go to the rally. Its entrance is marked by a huge rainbow made up of small balloons. Rainbow signs are all around. People hold boards listing reconciling individuals and congregations. The Reconciling Congregation Program banner is out, as is the Reconciling Parents banner. Other signs read, "Real Family Values: We Love Our Gay Son," and "Gay and Christian—Not an Oxymoron." The soundstage sports a large "Gay and Christian" sign. Some of the AMAR activists wear stoles. Stickers are handed out; they read "Hate hurts. Love heals. United Methodist PFLAG Families urge you to love and accept all our kids." The sun beats down, and people trade off for a moment in the few shady areas. I see a large contingent that appears to be Soulforce. Nearby some young adults are holding a banner that reads, "Sacred Worth: Garrett Evangelical Seminary."

There are perhaps 400 people here in the sweltering heat. A Soulforce member wears a shirt that says, "Fear the result of my unbelief. Freedom the result of my faith. God's perfect love casts out ALL fear. 1 John 4:18" on one side. The other side includes such points as "We are God's children too" and "Welcome us home." The woman wearing the shirt has a Southern accent. A musician is singing some of the same music that I've heard at the Good News breakfast briefings. After communion, we pass out of the rally area under the giant balloon rainbow, take up sections of an extremely long piece of rainbow ribbon, and completely surround the convention center, singing religious and protest songs. Finally, we pass the peace and the rally ends.

The Faith and Order committee is taking up the homosexuality-related petitions today and the area near the committee room is frantic, dozens of people milling around. A second room next door has been opened for observers to watch the action on a TV monitor. Many of the LGBT observers go to that room along with a few conservatives; I join them. The tension in the "TV monitor room" is almost unbearable.

The committee decides to begin with the clause stating that "homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian teaching." An evangelical says that if we reverse the long-standing, scripturally-based position on

this issue, the loss will be tremendous in both lives and dollars. We will see a massive departure, and this will hurt the church in other countries. He comes, he says, representing the folks at home. An inclusionist responds that we've confronted these issues before. He speaks to the experience of people sharing from their own lives and stories. He wants the committee to be driven by an honest allowance of the real difference of opinion on this matter.

Another evangelical says this is about the Bible, and that his part of the country takes the Bible seriously, implying that the inclusionists do not. He quotes the standard list of passages used to condemn homosexuality[6] and says that if the church is pushed to the point where it departs from the scriptural norm, it would cease to be the one holy catholic church. An inclusionist replies that there are legitimate theological differences within the United Methodist Church. A woman says that it is simple common sense to see that we are not of one mind on this issue. She considers herself a faithful Christian, and is willing to use "Faithful Christians disagree," "we are not of one mind" language. Jesus, she notes, said nothing about homosexuality.

An African man says that we are all created in God's image, and that we must uphold the *Discipline* since norms and values must be upheld in order for us to maintain our identity as Christians. He quotes the Bible, says not to hate or condemn other people, and urges the church to focus on transformational ministries. A woman says in response that the Bible is the number one book in her life. After telling some personal stories, she notes norms that have changed, even in her lifetime, about how to wear one's hair and whether Methodists can go to the movies. She focuses on indications of love and grace in the Bible, and notes Wesley's open-mindedness. Twenty years ago, she says, I would have been making a speech on the other side.

A man from Europe says that we need to keep this church united and that there must be no change of position. Changing our position would be to start cutting branches from the United Methodist Church. I don't know, he says, if we change this position if I have a church to come home to.

A woman tells of a man she knew who became heterosexual. "John," the committee chair, heartily says "Amen" as she finishes, than catches himself. The room gasps, and there is a long moment of silence as everyone realizes that John has endorsed the speaker despite the fact that the chair is supposed to remain neutral. A moment later, every inclusionist in the TV monitor room groans, understanding that John's single unintentional word has suggested the futility of the entire process. John is extremely embarrassed. He calls on a delegate, who says, we're not going to change each other's minds. Maybe, he says, we're not here for that reason.

"Jason," this delegate, tells some of his story, beginning with his family's long-time connection to Methodism, and ending with his coming out process and his relationship of nine years. Jason says that everyone else who has spoken is heterosexual and that they all believe that the entire committee is heterosexual. He compares it to men making decisions about and for

women, and whites making decisions about and for blacks. Crying, Jason says that he isn't worried about the legislation since his side can't win anyway, but that he is worried about people loving each other.

To my surprise, John is crying too, and he apologizes for his terrible, terrible mistake. He says that it was just a witness, but that in the minds and hearts of some it will look like he was supporting the woman who talked about transformational ministries. John says that he will seek the will of the delegation to remove himself from the position of committee chair. He makes a speech about not wanting to take sides, and he's always wanted to be fair and he knows his comment can be taken in many ways. Someone says John shouldn't step down because he made a statement of integrity following his mistake. The entire committee stands and claps. The PFLAG woman behind me says that this is good for the inclusionists too, since the vice-chair is even more conservative than John.

The next speaker, an African man, says it's better to stay with the devil you know, and that the current policy has not done too much harm for us (presumably the denomination). The conservatives remain unmoved as another woman gets up, says that there are a lot of people who haven't been able to be themselves for years and years and years, cries, and sits down.

An African woman says that the issue is very sensitive and we need the Spirit of God to discuss it. We are all God's children and God loves every one of us, she says, adding that we should love the sinner and hate the sin. The *Discipline* is clear on the issue, she notes, though of course the *Discipline* is exactly what is being contested right now. If she goes back to Africa with changes, what will her people see? We must not compromise the gospel of Jesus Christ, she says.

Another African delegate, speaking through a translator, says, when I look around this room I feel ashamed. I am ashamed because the gospel came from this land to us, but now you want to take us from the light to the darkness. The problem is something that is—the translator pauses, then says, yucky. Nervous laughter erupts through the room: someone finally said it. The delegate goes on about how we don't have the right to change the Bible. Back home, we don't accept the problem of homosexuality. Whoever doesn't like whatever we as children of God accept can start his own church. Back home, we don't discuss this. It's really yucky.

The next speaker, another African, says that because Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the way we have to follow is the Bible. If you want to keep the United Methodist Church united, let's follow the Bible. If this (homosexuality) is a sin, it is a sin. An inclusionist responds that the church hasn't welcomed everyone to the table.

An evangelical expresses pain about his position. He says he loves everybody there, including the people opposed to his viewpoint. What is more important, though, is how hard it is for the other part of the world. The universal church tells us to rely on the Bible, he says, and the Bible is the book he's relied on his whole life. If General Conference is not careful, it

will send the wrong message to the world. Are we making our decisions based on the values and guidance given in the Bible?

Another evangelical says that the compromise language is not really a compromise, since it deletes the clear "incompatibility" language. He says that replacing the "incompatibility" language with "faithful Christians disagree" language is essentially like deleting the "incompatibility" language entirely.

A pastor says that when he baptizes people, he does so without exception or caveat, since it is God's grace at work. Remarried people celebrate Easter in his church, though Jesus expressly forbids remarriage. The Scriptures are important and holy, he says, but we are quite selective in how we use them. God doesn't make load-limit bridges, he says. We put the limits on. He says that we always have to come back to people, the people who are left without a voice. His own voice shaking, he tells us that he stands in wonderment and amazement that people who have been silent so long and hurt so long even want to be in the church. Not only has the church put up a load limit, it has put up a sign saying, "Road Closed to You." I come, he says, as a pastor of a church with real people and a church of many cultures. How long, he asks, will it be before he sits at a service of repentance for the church's position on homosexuality? We will finally end up confessing our sin of exclusion, he says.

An Asian pastor says that the Methodist Church has been his world, and that his duty on the committee is to express the sentiment of Methodists in his country. If I go home with the rules changed, he says, the church would hang me. He talks at length about having been arrested and tortured, about economic inequality in his country, and about a whole host of things that are tangential to the subject at hand, if of grave concern more generally. He talks about the good that evangelism has done in his country. He says that the problem of homosexuality is a problem of rich and affluent nations. He talks about the life of the flesh as the playground of Satan, and about erasing all the manifestations of carnality and the flesh and becoming spirit. It's easy for God to change these abnormalities, he says, and talks at length about transforming ministries.

The next speaker says that it has been a long journey for him to get to the position he now holds. He struggles with the current language in the *Discipline*, because, as he says, for me as a Christian, it is grace that's the foundational part of my life. He says that there is a problem with taking a whole class of people and telling them they are outside the grace-filled community. The Bible, he says, did not know of sexual orientation. He quotes the biblical admonition "don't judge or you'll be judged,"[7] and says that sin is where we love things and use persons. This, he observes, can apply equally to homosexuals and heterosexuals.

"Victoria" describes a woman who came to her congregation to talk before committing suicide. The woman said, "I know only two things: I love my church, and I'm a lesbian and can't change." Her church, which had been

the most important thing in her life, had turned against her when she came out. Before leaving, the woman said to her, "Victoria, the church is killing me." We have different truths, Victoria says, and there's room for that.

An evangelical says that the church will survive, and that we need to continue to do God's will and to protect the Wesleyan heritage. He stresses that General Conference needs to make a clear statement and not go with the "faithful Christians disagree" language. In closing, he says that the church is the one place where you draw a line in the sand and take a firm position. An evangelical woman from the Caribbean follows him. Her talk focuses on being governed by Scripture, since the Bible is the essence of faith and discipline. The time has come, she says, for us to decide where to stand.

An inclusionist tells the story of Wesley's disagreement with another early Methodist, and of how they managed to compromise. We could probably have dueling Wesleys, she says, just as we have dueling Scriptures. She wants a compromise statement on homosexuality in the *Discipline* because this would let everyone leave with a feeling of integrity that the *Discipline* represents the whole denomination. She says that a compromise will show the world how the Methodists treat their enemies, who are also their brothers and sisters. A light chuckle dispels some tension.

An Asian man, now a pastor in a major U.S. city, says that this subject was not an issue at all in his native country, but was simply taboo. When he came to the U.S., he didn't meet openly gay people till he was sent to his current church. He tells the committee that one third of the congregation is openly gay or lesbian, and says that meeting real people really changed his perspective. His district superintendent, he says, told him to go there and minister to those people, and he asks the committee to imagine being pastor of a church where finance committee members, Sunday school teachers, and some fraction of virtually every other group in the church is gay. This, he says, is not a philosophical issue. That experience, he says to a hushed room, changed me. He talks about feeling the racism right away when he came to the U.S., and says he is appreciative of white people who try to help eliminate racism. I am, he says, appreciative of men who try to help the situation of women. How long do we have to wait, he asks, for gay and lesbian members of the church to be part of this community? I think we've waited long enough, he says. I think we can agree to disagree. He describes the congregation's participation in the city's gay pride march, and ends by saying, this is my story. Though I was born in a different country, I've learned.

A man with a military background says he wonders how many people really understand the ramifications of being a global church. He asks what would happen in places like Africa if non-Christians found out that the church removed its affirmative stand on homosexuality. In addition to being targets of non-Christians in wars and regional struggles, African Christians would be weakened as Christians. How could they be Christians and have to deal with that? The churches overseas could be devastated. Church growth, he reminds the committee, is occurring most rapidly

not here in the U.S., but elsewhere in the world. He says the statement is already a compromise statement. Agreeing to disagree, he says, means that the affirmative stand is gone. He knows what would happen if the church agrees to disagree: a domino effect would begin. Suddenly, his tone softens and for a moment he seems to become almost an entirely different person as he tells the committee that some of his closest relatives are homosexuals, and that one has been in a lesbian relationship for 35 years. He says that the family depends on her for its cohesiveness, and that he doesn't go home and try to "save" her. He doesn't know what God has in mind for her. He says he is ashamed of the homophobia he encounters, but he's not ready to change what he believes is incompatible with Scripture. He's heard the pain of the other side, and he understands that this is painful but the Scriptures keep him going. When we move a peg, he says, it becomes a ladder upon which Christian doctrine can no longer stand.

An inclusionist says that while Scripture has primacy, God is not dead and God's revelations continue to this day. The Bible itself is a story of progress in understanding what God wants us to be. The greatest commandment, said Jesus, is to love God and one's neighbor as oneself, then all else follows. This speaker wants to acknowledge honestly that the church is not together on this issue, that we understand faithful Christians to have different opinions. Scripture tells us, she says, that we are not to be conformed to the world, that we need to be a prophetic voice in some cases, speaking for God to the world.

A member of the Sacramento 68 asks that the majority not try to punish the minority, and explains how his understanding of Scripture has led him to where he is. "Ralph" tells the committee that the man who led him to Christ was a closeted gay man who later came out and confronted Ralph on his homophobia. This is my family, he says. This is my church. I love the church. Let's quit trying to force others to our viewpoint. Let's delegalize the prohibitions around homosexuality. Is there any way we can do this without anyone losing? There's got to be room for both positions in the church.

A woman talks about her artistic, creative young son who came home unhappy one day because other children had teased him on the bus, calling him effeminate and gay. That's not what I'm teaching my son, she says. We do unto others as we would have them do unto us, and we love our neighbors. She says that she would take all the exclusionary language out of the *Discipline* and make it so that everyone is welcome if she could. But she can't, so she wants the committee to learn how to compromise. Her hope is that when her son is old enough to go to General Conference, the denomination will have resolved its differences and found a way to work together. John Wesley, she says, taught us over and over again about grace, grace for all. (I hear some sniffles around me.) The next speaker says that he thought he knew where he stood, tells a moving story about a young gay man, and says that you can't go around proof-texting. He then says that

there is a theology of Scripture that will not let him go, that the current language allows for love of neighbor and primacy of Scripture, and that he's worried about division within the church if the wording is changed. His ambivalence is palpable.

The committee secretary is almost in tears as she begins to speak. She says that the church that taught her that Jesus loved her also taught her to love several people who she can't name, because if she named them they would risk the loss of their credentials. When we start drawing lines in the sand, she says, I wonder if we might invite ourselves to step into a circle of love. Her life has been deepened, she tells the committee, by the love of LGBT people. She says that three scriptural truths sustain her, the first of which is love. One of the tragedies of identifying homosexuality as a test of faith, she feels, is putting one's confidence into a belief instead of into God. The second scriptural truth is the promise that God is calling us always to a future that is beyond what we can now grasp. Her family owned slaves and took land from natives, she says, breaking down, and she doesn't want her children and grandchildren to live with that heritage. She will spend the rest of her life seeking to make the world more open, loving and just to people of color, and can do no less to LGBT people. They have suffered more than humiliation, she says. LGBT people have suffered beatings and murder, suicide and depression. Because we heterosexuals don't understand their experience, she says, we can't hear their tongues fully. The third scriptural truth she holds fast to is that of covenant. She says that people don't expect covenant to be messy, but it is, that God didn't promise Abraham that all his descendants would agree. My dream for the church, she says, is that we might delight in being a covenant people, not a people who agree.

A Latin American man says that while there may have always been homosexual people, the prophets, Jesus and the Apostles were clear in affirming heterosexuality exclusively. We Christians, he says, are people of a transformed life on the basis of a renewed understanding. The church of the New Testament dared to put discipline and order into itself, and called people to uncompromised holiness. Accepting homosexuals into the communion of the saints will by no means solve their problems or the problems of the church. His talk shades into a plea for transforming ministries to help free homosexuals of their trouble. He speaks of the roles with which God created people as men and women, and says that the church cannot be faithful to Wesley and tradition unless it holds up the holiness of the tradition. He closes by telling the inclusionists that we feel your pain and will be praying for you.

The committee takes a break. Exhausted, people leave their respective rooms. A delegate comes up to me, shaking, bursts into tears on my shoulder, and talks about how hard it was and how she was really trying to listen to both sides and how she felt pain from people on both sides. In the hallway some AMAR people, decked out in rainbow ribbons and crosses, sing, "Amazing Grace," "Jesus, Remember Me When You Come into Your Kingdom,"[8] and similar sacred music.

The first speaker after we reconvene wants to put human faces on this situation, and begins by holding up a lesbian couple that adopted a daughter. He mentions a heterosexual couple that came to his reconciling congregation after leaving a church they had been in for 30 years because it was not open to a gay pastor, and says that there are membership gains as well as losses. He tells of a young man who came up to him after their Annual Conference passed a resolution to be reconciling, and of the story the young man told him: he had left the vote angry, prayed, and experienced God asking him to look at what made him so angry. The speaker says that he mostly reads the Bible by looking at people, particularly the gay and lesbian people that he's gotten to know. How do I know that they've been baptized by the Holy Spirit, he asks? I see it in the fruits of their lives, how they act.

An evangelical says that she made a promise to be faithful to the Bible when she became a delegate. When the holy Word of God needs interpretation, you interpret it, and when it doesn't, you don't. When you decide to do things God's way, you need to change. There are going to be times when God's answers to the choices that you make will be no. You need to order your life by the Word of God, and sometimes, as hard as it is, that word is no.

The next speaker says that the Lord put something on his heart, and he's been wrestling with it all day. A few years ago he had a very strong personal position on this subject, but thanks to the Holy Spirit, his personal opinion isn't the same. We have a responsibility to act, he says. We get all involved in emotions, and confused. If our hearts haven't been wrenched, we have no business to be here. But when it comes time to make a decision, we need to get down on our knees and ask God's will. The man pauses, and then says, I think we've become more what John Wesley left than what he created. (Silence falls in the TV monitor room.) From my little corner, he says, it will have a lot of negative impact if the wording is changed, but for those who feel left out, it will feel awful if the wording is not changed. Maybe, he says, just maybe, "I've never done it that way before" is the best thing. Nonetheless, in light of the people who have grown up in the church and for whom a change would have negative effects, we've got to get on our knees before we change any wording that will make a tense situation even more tense, though I don't like it personally.

The disappointment in the TV monitor room is palpable. I remind myself that no one is likely to change anyone else's mind, and that the conservatives have the votes.

A woman says that a lot has changed since the Bible was written. She brings up the round earth heresy, and says that Jesus taught us to include the marginalized and to love everyone. He even ate with sinners, she says, can you believe? She talks about her friends who had to change their opinions about homosexuality after their children came out. Until we know more about homosexuality, why can't we simply be honest with each other and say we disagree? She draws a distinction between those who know how to vote on this issue because the Bible told them so, and those who have

real-world knowledge. She ends by saying that she and her husband have been married for more than 50 years and can disagree occasionally without breaking up.

The world is asking for moral direction, the next speaker says. The best we know we need to share, and that's what's currently in the *Discipline*. He says he feels like we've raised the Golden Calf of personal experience, implying that inclusionists are idolatrous.[9] Experiences are real and genuine, he says, but they may not be normative. We can't escape our subjectivity but neither can we use it as an excuse to ignore God's normative word. He says that some people are confusing love with approval, and describes his relationship with his children. He sees acceptance and inclusion in the *Discipline*. Permissiveness language says "no boundaries." We struggle with our cultural provincialism, he says, with attitudes shaped more by the culture than by Christianity. (This cuts both ways, I think, as I note his Southern accent.) Silence on this issue, he says, will be institutional enabling of wrong behavior.

An inclusionist talks about how God has worked in his life, and says that love casts out all fear. It seems to him, he says, that he's had a sense of fear, both within himself and others in the room. We need not be so afraid of the consequences, he says, inviting people to consider other times the church has changed—slavery, the ordination of women—and pointing out that love cast out fear in those instances. Twenty years ago, the speaker says, his bishop appointed him to serve a community that was largely lesbian and gay. When he arrived, the congregational demographics did not match the community demographics. The congregation wrestled with the relevant Scripture passages for several years, found itself called to serve the community, and everyone grew together. The speaker talks about coming to see God's love in lesbians and gay men, how this is often who God created those persons to be. He reminds the committee that people don't talk about the "practice" of heterosexuality as though it were divorced from the rest of who a person is.

The next speaker says he is torn between the desire to be holy on the one hand and compassionate on the other. In terms of comparing homosexuality to race, he asks, is there a volitional dimension? He says that maybe the issue is practice, and that the church can subscribe to inclusion without endorsement. He ends by saying that celibacy may be a peculiar witness of gay people. The next speaker says that the Spirit never leads us to contradict Scripture, that the gate is narrow, and that the issue is non-negotiable.

An inclusionist says that in the absence of final information on this topic, the first rule for the church of Jesus Christ is "don't be cruel." He finds recognition of the importance of intellectual humility missing in the discussion. He says there is a need to be intellectually honest, spiritually mature and pastorally sensitive.

An evangelical responds that there is consensus on this issue, that it's both historical and currently global, that it relies on Scripture, and that

it involves two sexes with sexuality to be expressed within marriage only. Another evangelical says that there are two senses of the "mind of the church," one sociological and the other theological. The issue here is theological and ecclesiological, having to do with the very essence and nature of the church. There is a "mind of the church" that exists in communion with the church, with both its living and its dead members, and that appears on the canons, creeds and doctrines. Talk of interpretations is just sociological, he says, whereas the matter of legitimate interpretations is theological. Americans confuse the sociological and ecclesiological mind of the church due to such American cultural aspects as individualism.

With this, the evening ends.

MAY 7, 2000

As the Faith and Order session begins, the committee is in struggle over how to move forward. Procedural issues and personal perspectives are interwoven, and it is not uncommon for one delegate to request that the committee wrap up the discussion and vote while the next delegate tells a moving story of why the committee needs to keep discussing the matter.

An inclusionist woman acknowledges that the conservatives have the votes to maintain the language. She asks them to join in a compromise. She's going halfway; can't they? She says that the incompatibility clause is the basis upon which other legislation is passed that asks her sisters and brothers to give up their pastoral leadership. These people, from whom she has received the bread and cup, who have given leadership that has benefited everybody—how can the church tell people whose leadership it has benefited from that it doesn't want their ministry? That's not justice, and she thinks that God's love comes down on the side of justice. So also should this community, by accepting a compromise.

An evangelical says that he represents a much larger issue, namely is the United Methodist Church going to be a cultural religion of modern middle-class American society or an authentic Wesleyan global ministry? If we change the language, he says, we are accommodating to middle-class American culture and isolating the church from global and historic Christianity. The desire to change the language represents the thinking of American culture rather than the witness of Scripture. The tradition says that prohibitions such as these are part of the moral law. The Christian tradition is transcultural and transnational and has existed for thousands of years. What is it we don't know about homosexuality? He acknowledges that homosexuality involves biological elements, but says that Christians know that the practice is wrong and contrary to the divine will as shown in Scripture. He calls homosexuality moral inversion. Isn't it a lack of spiritual humility, he asks, that we are not willing to trust Scripture? As Christians, he says, we should trust in the witness of Scripture rather than

being seduced by the modern western approach. He ends by saying that the attempt to undermine our moral position causes many of us to retrench around our position and gives us less energy to minister compassionately.

An evangelical says what he's trying to do is about what God says. He says there's not a person in the room he doesn't love. Justice and fair play are not the issue to him. He mentions the hundred wives of Solomon, and asks the group whether we should change the *Discipline* to speak to that. He says the question is whether the practice of homosexuality is a sin. It's not a matter of what you or I think. The question is, is it sin? I believe it's sin, he says. He is called to be obedient to God. What is God saying to each individual in this room about whether it's sin?

Suddenly, a committee member moves that the committee vote and someone else seconds the motion. Everyone casts their votes. It's nerve-wracking to watch. I feel a flash of rage: when this is all over, the conservatives and evangelicals will walk out and get on with their lives, and LGBT people will still be excluded. The vote is tallied and the incompatibility language is supported, 59 for, 43 against, 1 abstention. So there it is. Before anyone has time to breathe, the evangelicals are pushing a petition to keep the prohibitions on UM clergy performing same-sex unions in place. One speaker says it flows very naturally from the previous petition. If homosexual practice is incompatible with Christian teaching, we should not be able to affirm same-sex unions. The next speaker says she believes that the practice of homosexuality is a sin but doesn't believe that singling it out is the church's prerogative.

An evangelical says that the issue is not that of excluding people. The basic difference is in understanding of revelation and how we interpret Scripture. Until we agree on that, he says, we'll never agree on this. Which position of scriptural authority will this denomination affirm? The next speaker says our society is unraveling and our children are grasping for boundaries. She implies that LGBT people are like children seeking a total lack of boundaries. Unsurprisingly, she opposes changing the language.

An African says that if we are Jesus Christ's followers, we have to have the truth. Why are we still turning around on this? Are we missing the power and courage of saying no? We don't want to see the church divided. We as a church don't believe in homosexuality.

One of the Sacramento 68 leaders says that the homosexuality prohibition in Leviticus is based on patriarchy, on the idea that it is degrading for a man to be treated as a woman. He goes through the other key Biblical passages, saying that they don't deal with people in love wanting a commitment. I do not believe, he says, that the good news is, wives obey your husbands. This indicates second-class status.

The committee votes to keep the original prohibition and it passes, 64 for, 37 against, 4 abstentions. A woman in tears says that the committee does not concur, only one portion of the committee. We all take a break.

I am totally shaken, exhausted and sweating, and feel terrible for the inclusionist delegates and the AMAR folks. An inclusionist delegate tells me it will go this way all the way down. They won't compromise because they don't have to. It will be two-thirds to one-third as it has been. A gay pastor says the conservatives are essentially saying that the Holy Spirit is not allowed to work in his life as it wills, and that's a sin against the Spirit. The committee reconvenes.

A woman moves that the prohibition against lesbian and gay ministers be dropped. She doesn't believe that homosexuality is a sin, but even if it is, there's no reason for one individual issue to be held up to keep someone from ministry. She's followed by a Latin American evangelical, who thinks the decisions from before clearly enough state that we cannot accept homosexual ministers.

An inclusionist says that she thinks this is a case of using the Social Principles to set up situations where we are actually two-faced. It is okay to accept and ordain homosexuals, just don't say that you are. It's fine to accept all of their leadership, but if they say they're homosexual, they lose the opportunity to live out their call to ministry in the United Methodist Church, and that's unjust.

A conservative says that God's revelation to us was not a philosophical revelation but a historical one. Jesus is and was not relative but historical. The ordination issue did not become an issue until voices within the church started questioning tradition. Another conservative says the committee is moving in a general direction and we should continue to affirm the language preventing homosexuals from serving as pastors. A petition to this effect is voted on and passes, 67 for, 35 against, 1 abstention.

The session draws to a close. As members leave the room, they encounter a gauntlet of AMAR people singing religious songs. The conservatives look grim and leave quickly. Supportive delegates walk the friendly gauntlet, shaking hands with the singers and occasionally getting a hug. A key inclusionist sees them and smiles in a grimace. The delegate who came out as gay earlier leaves the room, goes up to a woman in tears, and comforts her. This is the last thing I see before I am crying so hard that I can't follow what's going on. The singers take up the tune, "Jesus, Remember Me When You Come into Your Kingdom." The line breaks, still singing in harmony.

The AMAR witness for the week is discussed at the nightly strategy meeting; it includes three daily newsletters (put out by AMAR, Affirmation, and MFSA), the various forms of storytelling by LGBT people and their parents, and the silent witness with the silhouettes. Someone says that the texts pinned to the silhouettes indicate how the antigay violence is rooted in violent language, and how much of that language is biblical. There's also a fast being planned called "Listen to our hearts: Fasting for truth." Those who fast will refuse all food until the prohibitive language is changed or General Conference is adjourned. They will wear badges with the number of days the individual has refrained from eating. This will send a message that AMAR

really wants delegates to know how serious this is. The group considers making rainbow armbands from cuttings of the rainbow ribbon used at the rally to surround the convention center. My God, I think, looking around at the stickers, badges, rainbow crosses and other garb, how much more symbolism do these people need? They are unlikely to change any minds by the sheer force of their beliefs, though the symbols do (as one leader says) celebrate the presence of LGBT people in the church.

The group discusses actions that will be taken to celebrate or protest the plenary votes. Someone suggests creating a climate for activity that will disturb the process and show that these are people who are so grieved that they are willing to run some personal risk. Someone else suggests that all of the stoles be worn to the convention center and that people wear gags. A leader says he wants to talk about what happens if it goes bad because we don't have good news. He raises the possibility of invading the floor, as happened in 1992 when someone carried a banner reading, "And the stones will cry out." He mentions shutting down General Conference in a spirit of love for our church, ourselves, and GLBT people. The shutdown would take place by walking past the marshals and refusing to leave. The speaker says that when business as usual destroys the dignity of children of God, business as usual has no right to go on.

These people are planning a political demonstration, I think. How can they imagine that this will win them friends and influence people? It will just exacerbate the extent to which the evangelicals view them as outsiders, and it may exacerbate the extent to which the denomination as a whole sees them as outsiders. I wonder what it says about the struggle that the only language the inclusionists seem to have to express their pain is political. The evangelicals already think that the inclusion movement is political rather than properly religious. Why would the inclusionists choose actions that reinforce the evangelical perspective? Of course I know one likely answer, not from my studies but from my gut: any time LGBT people are singled out for different treatment, the people doing the singling out are acting in a political manner. If my experience as a "sexual minority" has taught me anything, it's that homophobia and heterosexism are about power, inequality, first-class versus second-class status. So why should I be surprised to find the same lesson guiding the decision-making in this room? But it's exactly that life wisdom, I reflect, that may be rendering AMAR unable to grasp how it is coming across to those with different experiences.

And then I am ashamed. Maybe this is no longer about trying to win the vote, or indeed trying to win anything formal. Maybe this is the way a degraded set of people, talked about as though they were nothing more than a blight on the face of the church, claims some respect for themselves. In the face of such rendering invisible and unimportant as I have seen and expect to keep seeing, perhaps these ways of saying "I matter" are about personal dignity rather than about changing the voting outcome. In the process of working to keep the prohibitions in the *Discipline* unchanged, the evangelicals have

also affirmed and reaffirmed how wrong, how stigmatized, how sinful, how "yucky" homosexuality is. Who am I to say that a good old-fashioned protest isn't the most life-affirming response?

The group continues to strategize. Bursting into song is suggested as a disruption. A woman says that there has to be a way of saying enough is enough. Someone says that the group is not overly radical, directly after which a long-time activist talks about breaking chalices and throwing bread around. A gay pastor suggests having people in the balcony and delegates wearing stoles. Someone says that it's very important to have disagreeing delegates visible to remind people that there is disagreement. The planning continues late into the night.

MAY 8, 2000

Soulforce is out in full force at the convention center, wearing shirts that say, "We are God's children too" and "Stop Spiritual Violence." Former homosexuals show up with the "Sometimes Love Says No" banner. At the entrance to the convention center, someone hands out cards reading, "I am fasting from words in solidarity with those who have been silenced by the heterosexism of the United Methodist Church, and those who are making a prophetic witness to that Church in Cleveland." An evangelical tells me that God and one make a majority, and another says that in terms of having a conversation, if I don't believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, we can't even get to first base.

"Gerald," a gay man, tells me about the distilling purity and the painful fire of being gay and trying to stay in the church. He says there is a desperate purity about the pleas of these people to stay in contact with the God they grew up with. He quotes the Apostle Paul's comment about there being different members of the Body of Christ[10] and says that Good News wants everybody as long as they're a leg. A delegate says that when the restrictions ease, we'll know that either the second coming has started or hell has frozen over.

AMAR's nightly meeting focuses on actions that might influence the delegates, including the stoles litany, rainbow armbands, the presence of people wearing stoles in the balcony, people turning their backs on the process, the wearing of gags, an extended "word fast," Soulforce's planned protest, and writing more letters. A civil rights activist talks about race-based protests in the 1970s and mentions the anxiety of the guilty. The lengthiest topic of the night concerns a massive civil disobedience action planned for Wednesday.

MAY 9, 2000

Having not yet gone to a Reconciling Congregation Program lunchtime communion service, I do so. The service begins with songs that I can only

term "evangelical." Someone speaks of taking back worship. The bishop leading the service tells us that in communion, Jesus is saying to us, let's do lunch. Real laughter erupts, the first that I've heard in days. The communion hymn, "One Bread, One Body," is sung in four-part harmony a cappella and a chill passes through me even under the hundred-degree sun. After communion, it strikes me that this act of worship has revolutionary implications for the souls of LGBT folk, because no matter how much the church claims to love the sinner and hate the sin, the evidence I've seen is that the church hasn't been very good at loving the stigmatized sinner. To see devalued people eating holy bread and drinking sacred wine is extremely powerful.

During AMAR's evening worship, the pastor describes the inclusionists as the first fruits of the spirit and quotes the Apostle Paul's question, "If God is for us, who is against us?"[11] Everyone sings, "Be Not Afraid." Another pastor asks people to partner up and pray, and the worship draws to a close.

MAY 10, 2000

The convention center is awash in police officers, and a street evangelist is yelling at the delegates. The mood is extremely tense. AMAR people are offering the daily handouts with relentless cheerfulness. The evangelist yells at the Methodists to buck up and push the pagans back in the closet. You know fags can't get married, he says, it's not in God's Word. Notorious fundamentalist protester Fred Phelps and his family have come to town and are holding signs apparently created for this occasion: "Methodist Fag Church" and "Fag White" (presumably referring to Mel White). Other of their signs are better known: "Thank God for AIDS," "Dyke Sin," "Matt [Shepard] in Hell," "Hell is Real—Ask Matt," and "AIDS Cures Fags."[12]

I ask an AMAR man about his cheeriness. This is the mark of our movement, he tells me. As they turn up the heat against us, we affirm the hospitality of God's church. Nearby, the street evangelist urges delegates not to take literature from the sodomites because, as he says, you don't know where their hands have been. He reminds delegates that, as he puts it, everyone with a rainbow is a fag or a fag-lover. Another evangelist arrives with sign that says, "GAYS, Got AIDS yet! Romans 1: 27, Romans 6:23," and still another with a sign reading, "Leviticus 20:13, Man w/Man, Abomination, Put to Death." I ask an AMAR woman handing out newsletters how she's handling this. Well, it's not music to my ears, she says, but God is welcoming. We don't follow everything else in Leviticus or Paul.

A woman tells me that in her opinion, God loves everyone, but homosexuality is wrong, and the church should welcome everyone while showing the right way to live that's holy and good and righteous.

Soulforce begins its civil disobedience, blocking the entrance to the convention center. AMAR members chant, "We love the United Methodist

Church." Some are singing. A couple of bishops speak, as do various AMAR leaders. I recognize Rev. James Lawson, a UM pastor who worked with Dr. King. Someone says that King's daughter is here, and Gandhi's grandson. A sign reads, "No Exit without Justice." Feeling ill, I leave, but later learn that the arrests were peaceful and went as planned. About 190 people, including a bishop, were arrested. A simultaneous AMAR action involving about 80 people in the balcony also appears to have gone off without a hitch; at this action, General Conference was interrupted by a litany with the repeated phrase, "Extend the table," followed by a verse of "We Are Marching in the Light of God."[13]

MAY 11, 2000

At the UM Decision 2000 breakfast briefing, Good News says that the liberals want to delay things and prolong the agony in order to prevail on conservatives to change their minds and vote differently. Now's the crunch time, and it's important to show that our church is not evolving into a church that accepts the practice of homosexuality. Harlan reminds people that there are specific talking points from legislative action sheets to use as speeches. Another leader sees the transforming congregations as a compromise between the liberals and Fred Phelps. The liberals, this man says, say that the church doesn't need standards. Phelps, on the other hand, tells the truth, but packaged in such a way that no one is going to recognize it, it's so hateful. We conservatives, this man says, must recognize our own internal Phelps. We have got to remember that the genius of our Wesleyan movement is the balance between compassion and love, on the one hand, and law on the other. We need to uphold that standard, he says. Finally, another leader tells the group that the future of United Methodism is at stake, and promises a celebration breakfast tomorrow. My heart breaks.

I speak with a Faith and Order conservative. She tells me that she has a number of gay family members and friends, and that they basically all live and let live. She is quite concerned about the ravages of AIDS, though she does acknowledge that lesbians are the "chosen people" where AIDS is concerned. She fears a mass exodus from the church if the incompatibility language is changed. She is very friendly with me, warm and open, and when I point out that the same men who got AIDS might have stayed home and been monogamous had the church welcomed them, she acknowledges that this is true. She makes a point of saying that her position is a matter of belief and that she loves her gay friends and family members.

At the AMAR hospitality suite, plans for the protests are in full swing. Two groups meet, one discussing what they will do on the plenary floor, the other discussing what action will take place in the balcony. For several days, fake stoles have been available, torn strips of fabric long enough to be worn draped over one's shoulders in stole-like fashion. These were created

when so many inclusionists had arrived that the Stoles Project didn't have enough stoles for everyone. Today I feel compelled to wear a fake stole in solidarity, after nine days of keeping rainbow pins and pink triangles in my pockets. I select a frayed aqua piece of material and drape it over my shoulders as I've seen others do.

The convention center is bustling and humming with energy as I take a seat in the balcony. The episcopal address appears to support LGBT inclusion. This issue, I think, is not about causing division, but about exposing the division that's already there and rendering it problematic. If the inclusionists lose on a 40–60 percent split or a 33–67 percent split, it will be impossible to deny that the church is divided, even if the *Discipline* says it isn't. It occurs to me that AMAR's decision to protest on the plenary floor, even if it changes nothing official in the *Discipline*, offers a public witness to the division within the church, and for once I don't worry about whether the inclusionists will alienate delegates or even the larger church. The tension is electric. Unrelated resolutions take up time, and the balcony fills with edgy LGBT people and supporters.

Finally, it's Faith and Order's turn. John gets up, along with two inclusionists who will speak officially from the dissenting side. John says that Faith and Order stands in solidarity despite the diversity of opinion on certain issues. On Saturday, he says, the Holy Spirit visited and provided a transforming presence, allowing people to listen and to treat each other with dignity and love. (Show me some evidence, I think, suddenly furious, that the evangelicals treated Jason with dignity and love in their comments.) Discussing the incompatibility language, John says that the committee recommends concurrence, with the rationale being that the paragraph best represents the church's stance and conforms to the clear and true teaching of Scripture.

An inclusionist says that General Conference must be prepared to acknowledge our limitations and respect divergent views. All of us, he says, no matter where we live, are prone to voice the biases of our area, but we are all called to come past these biases and meet in compromise. He says that the church has had to change its mind about women, slavery, racial minorities, monarchy and feudalism, and asks whether the church will one day have to hold a service of repentance for how it has treated lesbian and gay people. We are divided, he says. Can we not acknowledge that? The differences cannot be wished away. Why, he asks, do we want homosexual persons not to give expression to their sexuality in loving acts? Why not judge them by the same criteria by which heterosexual relations are judged?

A conservative says that though the division is clear and he does not doubt anyone's sincerity, for those of us who believe that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching this is not an issue on which we can compromise. This does not make us homophobic, unloving or mean-spirited. For us to acquiesce in any way on this issue would be to sacrifice our integrity and to accommodate to our culture.

An inclusionist says that he was appointed to serve a church that turned out to have about 50 gay members, who sat on all the church committees and gave generously to the church. One such person had come to him and spoken about trying to change for ten years. When Christ didn't change the man, he left the church. Ten years later, someone told him there was a place for him in the church, so he came back. The speaker calls on all LGBT people in the room to "come home, you who are weary, come home," and draws an analogy with the parable of the prodigal son. He closes by saying that the church needs gay people to go out and make disciples of Jesus Christ.

A conservative says that it is hard to hit the target of goodness and truth, and that by trying to practice love for our homosexual neighbors we may undermine the moral position of the church that homosexual practice is outside the Christian norm of the covenant of heterosexual marriage. By trying to love our neighbors, he says, we may violate the commandment to love God, which involves delighting in God's moral law and God's purposes for creation. The other side, he says, fails to provide a moral position.

An inclusionist says that he wants to bear witness to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of gays and lesbians, who are perfectly normal committed Christians. It is a grace, he says, to acknowledge that others may have a portion of the truth. He focuses on the issue of humility and quotes 1 Corinthians 13 about love not insisting on its own way, about now knowing only in part what will later be known in full. He finishes by quoting the famous last line of 1 Corinthians 13 that, of faith, hope and love, the greatest of these is love.

A woman says we are called to order our lives by the book called the Bible. When the Bible is clearly understood, we should not mess with it. Sometimes the Word of God tells the people of God no. An African says the United Methodist Church must keep its holiness.

An inclusionist says that different groups of people in the room have different theological beliefs and different understandings of Scripture. We all want to be faithful to Jesus Christ, she says, but we differ on how to live out that faith. Don't cut off the branches, she says. We need not be fearful of truth. We who are many are one body.

Jason speaks, wearing a stole. He comes out as gay on the floor, and says that he has been in this church all his life. His grandfather, father, cousin and sister are United Methodist ministers. The Annual Conference that elected him knew he was gay, he says, but that's not why they elected him. He wants to be in this church. He says that he does not subscribe to an "anything goes" mentality, but that he has integrity in his life. He lives in a committed relationship, and is surrounded by a community that calls him to accountability. Jason mentions that most people on the floor are heterosexuals making decisions about those Methodists who are not. This is my life, he says.

The bishop calls for silent prayer, the vote is taken, and the incompatibility clause is upheld, 65 percent to 35 percent.

It's time to move on to the other homosexuality-related topics. John begins to present the majority report on excluding homosexuals from ordained ministry, which he says follows naturally from the understanding that homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. My blood boils. So this is how it's going to go. Where are the protesters?

They walk in from the side, in stoles, holding hands. They march to the front. A number of delegates rise in support, as do a handful of bishops. The presiding bishop asks the protesters to leave the floor and move to the balcony. He appeals to them not only to honor their witness, but also to maintain the decorum of the assembled body.

The protesters don't move. They sit down, and two make speeches about the church's exclusionary practices. One says that she is one of thousands of faithful homosexual United Methodists who have tried to gain a voice in the church by following procedures, and have been dismissed. We are not the ones breaking faith, she says. The voting body has tried to cut us out. The second speaker says that the group has come to ask prayerfully to declare a moratorium for four years on all of the exclusions in the *Discipline* on homosexual persons fully participating in the life of the church. He adds that the group will not be moved, that they will need to be moved by the police if the moratorium is not lifted.

The presiding bishop once again appeals to the group to leave, but without success. (Ironic, I think, finally a situation where the LGBT people here can control the situation, even if it's just for a moment.) Press cameras flash and the presiding bishop calls for a 20-minute recess. Close to a hundred delegates stay on the floor in solidarity, and inclusionists flood the balcony. I stand, sobbing, near a weeping heterosexual couple. We all sing "We Shall Overcome," and the supportive bishops start us off on "This Little Light of Mine." After a pause, the bishops sing "Amazing Grace" and several hundred inclusionists join in. I think I see Jason at the piano. The presiding bishop asks everyone to reconvene.

As the delegates return, a woman stands on the balcony, screams "I am a lesbian, I've been one all my life," appears to be about to tumble (or perhaps jump) down to the floor, and is safely caught and removed by several people near her.

The presiding bishop tells the crowd that he has been in touch with the protesters and that they are under the conviction that they must stay here. Their request is a motion for a moratorium on the application of all homosexuality-related language in the *Discipline* for four years, until the next General Conference. The group is sitting and kneeling, and has said that they will stand in the middle aisle if the moratorium is defeated—until the rules are changed, until they are arrested or until General Conference ends. A vote is taken on whether or not to approve the presence of the protesters as long as they remain sitting or kneeling. This vote passes, 65 percent to 35 percent, meaning that the protesters are allowed to stay on the plenary floor as long as they do not stand up. In response to applause,

the presiding bishop says that this is not a winners and losers gallery but the church of Jesus Christ gathered here. The delegates vote on whether to allow the presence of peaceful protest throughout the remainder of General Conference, and this appears to pass, 69 percent to 31 percent. We've finally seen the movable middle, I think bitterly. The care being taken now with procedural matters is amazing; it's as though there is a general sentiment that the church is a fragile vessel and could break if handled roughly. This latest vote also means that if the protesters want to force the issue and get arrested, they will need to take some further action.

A delegate in a stole speaks on behalf of the moratorium. Its purpose, he says, is to give us time for the process of discernment and dialogue in the spirit of the church. There is enough pain now in the life of the church, and we do not need more confrontation. A conservative asks whether the effect of passing the moratorium is essentially that of removing the language from the *Discipline* for the next four years, and the delegate who spoke first confirms this. Two conservatives point out in turn that this means repealing what has already been passed. A woman in one of the fake stoles says that the moratorium does not violate the *Discipline*. It seems, she says, that we can't get away from doing violence to each other, and she pleads with the group in the name of the gospel and in the name of Jesus Christ to stop the violence.

A conservative argues that a moratorium doesn't solve anything, says we need to make clear where we stand as a denomination, and terms the postponement an act of cowardice. An African delegate asks whether the delegates as a whole are not now acting under direct intimidation. At times, he says, we need to speak with that force that led Joshua to say, as for me and my people, we will follow God. We are moving, the delegate says, from liberalism to laxity and into lawlessness. We cannot question Holy Scripture. Don't betray the church in Africa, he pleads. By supporting homosexualism we will destroy the church in Africa.

A delegate in a stole says she needs to go home to a church that, in the absence of a moratorium, will need to grieve its exclusion one more time. Another inclusionist says the church needs to humble itself so that people can come to know one another, which is what the moratorium will allow us to do. A conservative asks if this means the church has to allow the ordination of homosexuals and holy unions. Other conservatives say similar things. It gets ugly. The moratorium vote is held, and the motion goes down with 33 percent supporting and 67 percent opposed.

The delegates turn to the ordination of LGBT ministers. An Asian speaks in favor of ordination. God forbid, he says, God forbid the decisions we make today are used as baseball bats to smash heads. He differentiates between unity and uniformity.

A conservative says that it hurts him to hear those who would vote against ordaining homosexuals (including himself) described as those who would wield a baseball bat. We want the church to be a place where all are

welcome, he says, but we speak and vote against this because we understand the importance of clarity. He calls the church to be clear, truthful, gracious and loving, and says that we are a people of grace. We are also a people of truth.

An inclusionist says the phrase "practicing homosexual" is literally meaningless. He's a practicing heterosexual, but it doesn't say anything about him. He says the prohibition is condemning a class of people. An African says that these are matters that concern the church in the United States, but that the United Methodist Church is a global church. A pastor accepted here would not be accepted in Africa. The delegates vote to maintain the prohibition against ordaining "self-avowed, practicing homosexuals," 67 percent to 33 percent. As the protesters stand, I leave the balcony, feeling broken, numb, bitter and full of grief all at the same time. The delegates take a break and a stream of conservative delegates flows from the auditorium, grinning, high-fiving each other, embracing, shaking hands and saying, we did it. One sees me in my stole and averts his eyes. Shame? Guilt? Who knows? I am beyond caring.

I go to the lunchtime communion, where dozens of people gather and weep. The bishop leading the service reads from Psalm 23.[14] I learn that the protesters on the plenary floor were given permission by the marshals to come to this service and take communion, and that their (illegal) places on the floor will be held for them until they come back from communion, but that no new protesters may join them. How "reasonable," I think bitterly. They sing, "Here I Am, Lord," many of them waving their hands in the air. A number of dry-eyed LGBT UMs are comforting weeping heterosexual allies.

I tell a man wearing a rainbow ribbon that I'm sad for him. He says that the Holy Spirit is moving. We're changing minds. I know we're not changing votes, he says, but one day we will be a welcoming church. Another inclusionist says she doesn't know how she stays in the UMC but she does, and she calls herself a fool for God. Someone else says, they really don't want us here. They really don't want us.

In the AMAR hospitality suite, inclusionists carefully sort and put away the Stoles Project stoles. Most of the fake stoles have been returned and stuffed into a garbage can. Several people are poring over Bibles and an altar of sorts has been set up. Someone says that pastoral counseling will be offered. Someone else reports on the arrests of the protesters, which went off as planned.

A group comes in, singing "This Little Light of Mine." An AMAR pastor begins a ceremony. The group sings, "Jesus, We Are Here for You, Jesus, You Are Here for Us" and "We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder." More people trickle in, some in tears, many holding each other. A Latino man says he had a bishop arrested for him and he's joyful. Everyone breaks into, "I'm Gonna Sing When the Spirit Says Sing." The leader says that this is holy ground. Even when people were physically present, talking from their own

experience, she says, there were hearts of stone. The service goes on with sharing in small group cells, singing and praying together. A pastor tells the group that order has become sacrosanct to the church. The worship leader says to the assemblage that we are the church. And the gathering ends.

Over dinner, an inclusionist pastor says that the good news is that Good Friday is not the last word. The bad news is that this is "Good Friday."

MAY 12, 2000

I learn that last night, all those who were arrested were released on bond, that they appear to have been treated well, and that they went out dancing after they were freed.

An African pastor now working in the United States says he supports LGBT inclusion. He tells me that he has known exclusion, and that no one should be excluded. He also says that the real issue is sexuality, not homosexuality. If the church could deal with sexuality in general, the votes would have been different. As we talk, I notice the TV monitor showing the morning worship service. A bishop is reading the biblical passage about Jesus coming to bring, not peace, but a sword.[15] I look more closely and see that she is wearing a rainbow ribbon. This juxtaposition of biblical passage and rainbow ribbon seems a fitting end to my fieldwork. I bid the pastor farewell and head for the Cleveland airport to fly home.

5 Analytic Perspectives
Culture Wars

The LGBT inclusion struggle at General Conference 2000 demonstrates, as a 1996 delegate said, that with regard to homosexuality "the church appears to be polarized into two camps, separated by a continental divide. [There] appears to be no middle ground; everything flows to one side or the other."[1] This chapter and the following three assess several different analytic perspectives in order to make sense of both the delegate's observation and the inclusion struggle, particularly given the latter's high-stakes nature for inclusionists and evangelicals alike.

Both in religious settings and in the public sphere, liberals and evangelicals differ sharply on certain values and beliefs,[2] acceptance of homosexuality among them.[3] Probably the best known academic approach to these differences is James Hunter's "culture wars" analysis, introduced in Chapter One. In seeking to understand why neither side on the UM sexuality struggle is able to convince the other of its claims, it is reasonable to begin with this widely recognized approach that is supported by some, but not all, of my data. Culture wars claims are also intuitively appealing because they take both sides' perspectives into account, and because both conservatives and inclusionists themselves find a culture wars analysis plausible. For reasons explained at the end of the chapter, I nevertheless reject a culture wars approach for its failure to provide a sufficient explanation of the UMC inclusion struggle. The bulk of the chapter, however, considers evidence in support of the approach in order to determine just how far a culture wars analysis can take us.

Hunter's culture wars approach begins with the insight that conflicts usually understood as political, cultural or social might actually be moral, driven by different understandings of moral authority.[4] Hunter identifies the two most common moral visions as "orthodoxy" and "progressivism." People with orthodox moral commitments believe that an "eternal, definable, and transcendent authority" makes certain truths known to humanity; these truths are non-negotiable because they come, not from limited human perspectives, but from a reality that is holy and ultimate. In contrast, progressivists are committed to the belief that "truth [is] a process, a reality that is ever unfolding," and that, therefore, traditional faith needs to be supplemented with contemporary wisdom and insights. According to Hunter, progressivists

do not reject religion as such, but rather retool it so that it is capable of incorporating "the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life."[5]

Earlier studies of religious conflict in the United States had tended to find contention between denominations or religions (Bellah and Greenspahn 1987); Hunter argues that religious conflicts have now moved inside denominations (1991: 43), such that the orthodox elements of two denominations or even two religions might have more in common with each other than either has with the more progressivist elements within the same denomination or religion.[6] Moreover, while most Americans occupy a "vast middle ground" between the two polarizing tendencies, elites and their special interest organizations lead to what Hunter terms an "eclipse of the middle." For Hunter culture wars come down to struggles between groups with differing moral understandings to "monopolize the symbols of legitimacy" in order to hold a dominant position in society.[7] Cultural conflict is thus a "*struggle for domination* . . . to achieve or maintain the power to define reality."

In his study of American morality, Wolfe (1998: 79) finds that Hunter's analysis holds particularly well with regard to homosexuality, and observes that there are "two genuinely different moral camps in America" on the issue. While Hunter himself does not discuss homosexuality at length, where he does so he agrees with Wolfe in claiming (1991: 189) that homosexuality is among the culture war issues that generates the most "raw emotion" because "few other issues challenge the traditional assumptions of what nature will allow, the boundaries of the moral order, and finally the ideals of middle-class family life more radically."

Hunter's culture wars approach is directly relevant to the UMC inclusion struggle. The two sides clearly "disagree profoundly about the fundamental nature of what they are contesting" (Wolfe 1998: 79). The evangelicals reject as a sinful act or practice what the inclusionists see as a basic identity. The evangelical "moral wrong" is an inclusionist "civil right." What the evangelicals see as an immoral choice, comparable to thievery or prostitution, is experienced by the inclusionists as God-given, a natural outflowing of their humanity. Those evangelicals who admit that homosexuality may be innate in some sense see it as equivalent to alcoholism, symbolic of a fallen world, and urge homosexuals to abstain or to become transformed to heterosexuals. Inclusionists see homosexuality as equivalent to race, a morally neutral status and one that has been the locus of extensive prejudice and discrimination. Finally, to evangelicals, electing a "homosexual lifestyle" indicates selfish rebellion against God, whereas, for inclusionists, being an out, proud LGBT Christian is a way of glorifying God by affirming that God made one gay and that gay is therefore good. Why the differences? Hunter would undoubtedly say that UM conservatives and evangelicals have orthodox moral commitments, while inclusionists have progressivist moral commitments.[8]

Other research on the inclusion struggle supports the idea that the conflict is a culture war. Wood's (2000) study of 1996 General Conference delegates shows a correlation between orthodox or progressivist stances, on the one

hand, and positions on sexuality issues, on the other. An orthodox commitment to an "eternal authority" and "non-negotiable moral truths" is visible in the conservative delegates' understanding that the Bible is God's word and everything it says is true; such a commitment is also apparent in the idea that God's final revelation about homosexuality is found in Scripture. Between two-thirds and more than nine-tenths of 1996 delegates holding such orthodox positions believed that homosexuality was a sin, opposed the ordination of lesbians and gay men, and opposed same-sex marriage within the church. In contrast, the progressivist commitment to truth as an ever-unfolding process, and to the incompleteness of "traditional faith language," appears to be correlated with inclusionist stances. Slightly less than a third of delegates who believed that God's revelation about homosexuality was ongoing agreed that homosexuality was a sin, and slightly over half supported the ordination of lesbian/gay clergy. Three-fifths of such delegates still opposed same-sex marriage in the church, suggesting that other factors also explained their values on the topic. Only a fifth of delegates who believed that the Bible contained errors reflecting human and cultural limitations understood homosexuality to be a sin, while three-fifths supported the ordination of lesbian/gay clergy and half supported same-sex marriage in the church. Table 5.1 below summarizes Wood's relevant findings.

Table 5.1 Orthodoxy, Progressivism, and Positions on Homosexuality Issues Among 1996 General Conference Delegates*

*Beliefs About the Bible***	*Orthodox or Progressivist*	*Homosexuality a sin?*	*Position on lesbian/gay ordination in UMC*	*Position on same-sex marriage in UMC*
God's revelation about homosexuality ended with the Bible	Orthodox	91% say yes	95% oppose ordination	97% oppose same-sex marriage
God's revelation about homosexuality is ongoing	Progressivist	31% say yes	54% support ordination	60% oppose same-sex marriage
God's word; all it says is true but not all to be taken literally	Orthodox	68% say yes	18% support ordination	16% support same-sex marriage
Bible written by people inspired by God but contains errors reflecting the limitations of the authors and the culture of their times	Progressivist	22% say yes	59% support ordination	51% support same-sex marriage

Source: Wood 2000: 57, 63–64, 77

* Because Wood includes only partial information from his survey findings, it is not possible for me to consistently show either support for, or opposition to, ordination for all four orthodoxy/progressivism positions; the same limitation holds for the same-sex marriage column.

** Wood's comparison involved taking survey data from all delegates who held each of these beliefs about the Bible and determining what percentage of delegates with that belief also believed that homosexuality was a sin (for example).

Data from my research also support a culture wars analysis. As reported in Chapter Four, debates in committee meetings and on the plenary floor frequently came down to Scripture and tradition (sources of non-negotiable transcendent truth) for the conservatives versus experience (the revelation of new truths) for the inclusionists. Recall, for example, a conservative delegate's argument that "the Spirit never leads us to contradict Scripture, the gate is narrow, and the issue is non-negotiable." At another point, an inclusionist's request for "intellectual humility" (in the face of potential new information) is met with an evangelical's comment that failing to trust Scripture (the source of God's revealed non-negotiable moral truths) demonstrates a lack of "spiritual humility."

In general, evangelicals were more likely to take what the Bible says about homosexuality at face value ("if it says it's a sin, it's a sin"), to reject the inclusionist appeal to personal experience as secondary to the authority of Scripture, to claim that it is not possible for faithful Christians to disagree on this issue, and to be unwilling to compromise. In addition, literature from the conservative caucuses supports the claim that they are working from an orthodox moral stance as defined by Hunter. The below quote from the Confessing Movement[9] provides a compact brief for the applicability of this model:

> *We repudiate* teachings and practices that *misuse* principles of inclusiveness and tolerance to distort the doctrine and discipline of the Church. We deny the claim that the individual is free to decide what is true and what is false, what is good and what is evil. We reject widespread and often unchallenged practices in and by the Church that rebel against the Lordship of Jesus Christ . . . Any new teachings in the Church that seek to set aside the biblical witness cannot be established by votes, or appeals to personal experience, or by responding to contemporary social pressures. According to the apostolic faith, such teachings and practices are false and unfaithful to the Gospel . . . This, then, is our confession: *We confess that Jesus Christ is the Son, the Savior, and the Lord, according to the Scriptures*. The United Methodist Church has never had an institutional guarantee of [doctrinal] diversity without boundaries. . . . We will faithfully support United Methodist activities, groups, programs, and publications that further this confession, and we will vigorously challenge and hold accountable those that undermine this confession.

Inclusionists, in turn, demonstrated their progressivism in a variety of ways. They were far more likely than evangelicals to draw on their own experiences (including encounters with LGBT people) to explain their beliefs and commitments; to want to "put more human faces on the situation" as one delegate put it; to "witness" with their life stories; to prioritize the "need to always come back to people" rather than to biblical authority; to read the Bible in a more liberal way; and to proclaim that they had been and continued to be open to the possibility of change in a more inclusive direction on the homosexuality issue.

A good general example of progressivism among inclusionists can be found in the writings of the Sacramento 68. The Sacramento 68 is a group of California pastors who participated in the blessing of an illegal holy union as an act of ecclesiastical disobedience in 1999. Once charged with breaking church law, they were invited to provide statements of defense, a number of which were collected in an anthology.[10] The defense statements demonstrate that these pastors frequently justified their participation in the ceremony by appealing to continuing revelation; real peoples' lives; personal stories; trust in what science says about sexuality; the Spirit moving them into a new future; reading the Bible in its historical and cultural context; and reliance on their consciences and intellects. To some extent, all of these justifications involve or derive from a belief in continuing revelation, whether that belief results in respect for the findings of science and modern biblical scholarship, a focus on the ever-moving Holy Spirit, or the use of personal experience to critique orthodox interpretations of Scripture.

Additional support for a culture wars analysis is found in a closer consideration of the Scripture-experience difference between the two sides; in the way inclusionists think about openness to change; and in the fact that both sides themselves see a culture war at work even when they do not use Hunter's phrase to describe the situation. I cover each of these points in turn below.

EVANGELICAL AND INCLUSIONIST ENCOUNTERS WITH SCRIPTURE ON HOMOSEXUALITY

Evangelicals frequently claim that the debate over holy unions and gay pastors is meaningless because the Bible settles the issue; as one evangelical delegate put it during committee debate, "Scripture says it's wrong and nothing says it's right." One conservative delegate told me that homosexuality "is wrong, it is a sin, it is non-biblical and my convictions are non-negotiable."[11]

Recall the plenary floor claim of a conservative delegate that when the Bible is clearly understood, we should not mess with it. One delegate told me that he had read the scholarship claiming that the Bible does not condemn

committed same-sex relationships, but that for him the scholarship came down to "unconvincing gymnastics." Conservatives and evangelicals believe that the Bible is so obvious on this matter that a denominational return to scriptural principles would end the struggle over homosexuality in the church. "Jim" said he totally accepts, "no ifs, no ands, no buts, the inerrancy of the Scripture and to me the Scripture plainly says, five different places, that the practice of same-sex orientation is, as our *Book of Discipline* says, not compatible with Christian teaching." The same point was made in this representative petition sent to General Conference 2000:

> We call the church to take the leadership role using the Holy Scriptures, as written, as the guide for all decisions concerning homosexuality and lesbianism as they relate to Christian living . . . We believe that homosexuality, lesbian, gay, transvestites, transgender, bisexuality, pedophiles and any other practices of the homosexual and lesbian lifestyles, and the practice thereof, are sinful just like the sins of murder, stealing, etc.[12]

Underlying this petition is the belief that one must take Scripture at its word in these matters, even if what Scripture says seems unreasonable or illogical. One of the evangelical pastors in the California-Nevada Annual Conference who left the denomination told a reporter:

> The issue has always been couched as, "Aren't we awful because we don't bless same-sex unions." That's not the issue at all. . . . This conflict is theological . . . It has to do with whether or not you believe the Scripture is the authoritative word of God, inerrant in its principles. So if it says adultery is sinful, you believe it, homosexuality is sinful, you believe it, gossip is sinful, you believe it.[13]

While conservatives believe that inclusionists don't take the Bible seriously, my experience of the inclusionists and my encounters with their writings lead me to think that they do take the Bible seriously; they simply approach it differently. One gay pastor said that the Bible was his life, that he got up to it in the morning and went to bed to it at night. Unlike the conservatives, however, when inclusionists read the Bible on homosexuality they pay attention to issues of interpretation, translation and cultural context. One delegate argued that the Bible did not know of sexual orientation, implying that Scripture did not speak to the inclusion struggle in the way the conservatives thought. A gay man said Wesley's claim about the Bible was that Methodists believe in it but it's the church's job to decode it. It's necessary, this man said, to interpret the Scriptures on homosexuality as having been instructive for the minds of years ago, and to ask whether they have relevance today. During the first AMAR strategy meeting I attended, inclusionists had a discussion about biblical analysis, scholarship and ways

of reading the Bible in its historical and cultural context. When I left that meeting, the group was discussing the original Greek terms that are translated as "homosexual" in today's English-language Bibles.[14]

United Methodists are not the only inclusionists with a progressivist approach to the Bible. An inclusionist Presbyterian observed that "when the writers of the original sacred text—the Bible—wrote all those years ago, they thought the earth was flat. Am I obliged to think the earth is flat? They also thought that there was only one sexuality, and that was heterosexuality."[15]

INCLUSIONIST APPEALS TO PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Inclusionists tend to rely on personal experience in making their case for inclusion in much the same way that evangelicals rely on the Bible in making their case for holding the line on homosexuality. Beyond the material reported in Chapter Four, I noticed this tendency at an early AMAR meeting while listening to stories of how people became involved in the inclusion struggle. As I heard them talk, I came to understand the extent to which personal experiences fueled inclusionist passion to change denominational policies. Some people spoke of the pain of being a lesbian or gay UM. Others described their pastoral work with lesbians and gay men, and several people discussed the spiritual support groups they led for LGBT people or people with AIDS. One woman talked about a man who committed suicide over his sexuality. A pastor told the story of a young gay man who had been tossed out by his family. This pastor, who was involved in a regional AIDS ministry, said that he had known more than 80 people with AIDS, now all dead. Another pastor said that the church was hurting and that this really bothered him. The stories were powerful to hear, and people, myself included, cried as they talked or listened to others.

While inclusionists take the Bible seriously, the immediacy and power of inclusionist personal experiences appear to inform their responses to Scripture in certain ways. Recall the comment of one speaker during a committee meeting that he mostly reads the Bible by looking at people, particularly the gay and lesbian people that he's gotten to know. He knows that they have been baptized by the Holy Spirit because he sees it in the fruits of their lives, in how they act. Nor is this slippage from Scripture and doctrine to experience limited to United Methodists. A Lutheran inclusionist has written,

> When asked if he believed in infant baptism, Mark Twain replied: "Believe in it? Why, I've seen it!" Such is the case with the ordination of openly lesbian and gay pastors today. Do I believe Lutherans should ordain openly gay or lesbian persons to the ministry of Word and Sacrament? Believe in it? Why, I've seen it! Lesbian and gay pastors who

> are in committed relationships are already serving in the [ELCA] regardless of current policy.[16]

The ideas that one can "read the Bible by looking at people," and that experience should guide doctrine, are distinctively progressivist, and conservatives take such claims as proof that the inclusionists have rejected scriptural authority and thus, by definition, rejected classical Christianity.

"ISSUES" VERSUS "LIVES"

> I know in my heart that anyone opposed to ordaining gay and lesbian people is unlikely to change his or her mind through argument. I am convinced that it is deep, loving relationships that open us to the movement of the Spirit and free us to change. It is when we come to know a gay or lesbian Christian 'up close and personal' . . . that those barriers become irrelevant. When you know and work with and worship with someone whose calling is compelling and whose gifts are great, sexual orientation is just not an issue.[17]

This comment by a Presbyterian provides an example of the inclusionist propensity to draw a distinction between abstract theological "issues" and real LGBT Christian "lives." This distinction, which demonstrates further the inclusionist reliance on experience, arose with some frequency during my research. For example, a pastor charged for carrying out a holy union pointed out that he was just trying to serve the 30 percent of his congregation that was gay or lesbian, and claimed that the holy union was about people, not abstractions.[18] Another pastor, whose comments during committee debate were reported in Chapter Four, said that one-third of his congregation was openly gay or lesbian and that meeting real people changed his perspective. He asked the committee to imagine being pastor of a church where finance committee members, Sunday school teachers, and some fraction of virtually every other group in the church was gay, adding that this was not a philosophical issue. A General Conference handout by the Parents' Reconciling Network (2000) described its purpose as "helping others understand that our children are real human beings, not subjects of a vague philosophical issue to be endlessly debated." In the AMAR hospitality suite, the woman in charge of the Stoles Project told me that people thought they were voting on issues, forgetting that they were voting on lives; another lesbian told me that for the inclusionists, this was a very intensely personal human issue whereas for the other side, it was more abstract and theological. One inclusionist[19] argued that "as a gay man, homosexuality is not an 'issue' for me; it is my life." During an AMAR strategy meeting, an organizer pointed out that "we're not talking

about theoretical differences of opinion; we're talking about real human beings." Just as the conservatives read the inclusionist appeal to experience as a rejection of the Bible, the inclusionists interpreted the conservative appeal to Scripture and theology as an elevation of abstract, philosophical "issues" over living, breathing, hurting people in need of just treatment and support from the church.

The inclusionist focus on "real lives" was also based on a strong conviction that the only possible way to sway delegates opposed to full LGBT inclusion was to demonstrate just how damaging holding the line on homosexuality was for living, breathing, hurting people. At an AMAR meeting, an organizer reported that volunteers were being assigned to delegates on a one-to-one basis in order to witness more effectively, after which another organizer told the room, "the conservative delegates have read the resources, but they don't know *you*." One inclusionist wore a button that said, "I have a story. ASK ME." A Parents' Reconciling Network (PRN) member told me that the group was trying to use family power to work for LGBT inclusion, and showed me how the PRN badges had photos of the parents' LGBT children and brief descriptions of them. Another inclusionist told me that members of Cleveland-area reconciling congregations prepared for General Conference by sending hundreds of handwritten letters to delegates who had not expressed clear positions on the homosexuality issue, and that the letters included very personal stories and photographs. This same individual said she had thought about sending family Christmas cards because that would put a face on the issue, adding that she thought conservatives didn't know anyone gay. This belief that "knowing" LGBT UMs would lead inevitably to an inclusionist position was also reflected in the litany of AMAR members as delegates entered the convention center: "Know your people. These are good people of faith and hope who love their church."

CONSERVATIVE RESPONSES TO THE INCLUSIONIST FOCUS ON "REAL PEOPLE"

The depth of conservative-inclusionist difference is particularly visible in conservatives' responses to the inclusionist focus on experience and "real people." Discussing the Lutheran inclusion struggle, Payne and Childs (2005: 23–24) summarize the two sides' views of experience:

> Some would argue that the experience of faithful gay and lesbian Christians should point to their full acceptance in the church, its rites, and ministries. Others downplay the importance of experience and point to fallen human nature and our tendencies to confuse Christian experience of God's Word with human feelings that easily deceive us.

Like the latter type of Lutherans, UM conservatives and evangelicals are deeply suspicious of the appeal to experience, not least because "fallen human nature" renders experience inadequate as a guide for moral living. Recall the delegate who referred to the "golden calf" of experience, thus implying that inclusionists had put an idol before God. This delegate went on to say that while experiences were real and genuine, they might not be normative, and that subjectivity was inevitable but should not be used as an excuse to ignore God's normative word. From this theological perspective, Scripture (and tradition) are the ultimate sources of moral guidance and always outweigh limited, fallen human experience.

One value of a culture wars analysis is that it alerts us to the possibility that the inclusionist appeal to experience may have unanticipated negative consequences for inclusionists. By appealing to experience as a device through which to read the Bible,[20] inclusionists force their listeners to make a choice which, much of the time, will not go the way they themselves would prefer. Most United Methodists will put their trust in the Holy Bible as God's Word, rather than in the experiences of people who seem to be rejecting parts of God's Word. Inclusionists can appeal to Jesus' welcoming interactions with individuals as reported in the Gospels, and they can appeal to the continued working of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Neither of these approaches, however, is likely to match the institutional weight of Scripture and tradition for moderate UMs. Moreover, as noted during the committee debate, the reliance on experience seems to fit a little too well with a "modern" "American" individualism that is not in keeping with "historic Christianity." Conservatives thus come away from the Scripture-experience debate looking more like committed Christians; inclusionists come away looking more like the (individualist) "world" against which "the church" defines itself.

From a culture wars perspective, the inclusionist reliance on experience may be problematic in another way. While inclusionists who reflect on the struggle during the years between General Conferences often have sophisticated analyses of why the conservatives act as they do (e.g., Griffith 1995), AMAR members at General Conference 2000 all seemed to assume that "knowing your people" would lead inevitably to support for full LGBT inclusion. This assumption may have made it harder for them to comprehend resistance to their position. The only conclusion that AMAR members around me seemed to be able to draw in the heat of the moment was that those who did not agree with them had "hearts of stone," as a leader at the post-vote worship service said. On the second day of General Conference, a member of the Parents' Reconciling Network told me that conservatives got "stony-eyed" and never looked at the "My Child is of Sacred Worth" badges worn by reconciling parents. By this analysis, the conservatives failed to become inclusionists only because they were unwilling to really get to know the LGBT UMs, to love them as Christ would have loved them. While I certainly experienced the conservatives as stony-hearted at

times during the fieldwork, such an explanation seems to me incomplete in understanding why the conservatives worked so hard to maintain the prohibitions and the incompatibility language. Indeed, some of them had lesbian or gay congregants, friends and family members.[21] In this instance, it may make more sense to trust that conservatives were telling the truth as they understood it when they claimed that experience could not be normative. While it is impossible to know whether AMAR would have acted differently at General Conference 2000 had they taken this particular conservative claim at face value, there is at least a chance that they would have developed strategies that relied less heavily on getting the delegates to "know their people."

DOES GOD DO NEW THINGS?

> It's my final night at General Conference. The voting is over and the protesters have been arrested. I'm having dinner with two pastors. Over dessert, one of the pastors tells me about his Bible professor in seminary, who would rip the back cover off a Bible at the first class each semester and say that the story wasn't finished yet (Field notes, May 11).

Both in their writings and at General Conference, the inclusionists were much more likely than the evangelicals to talk about change, whether that meant continuing revelation, new biblical scholarship, personal growth, the value of change for the church as an institution, or the moving of the Spirit. This inclusionist focus on change makes sense given that the conservative position was essentially one of stasis; they relied on an already-written Bible and an already-developed Christian tradition to maintain already-existing denominational prohibitions. In contrast, the inclusionist case depended on the possibility that what the Bible said about homosexuality might be true for an earlier time but not for today, and that there might be more yet to learn for both individuals and their denomination.

While many of the appeals to growth and change involved personal stories, such as those reported in Chapter Four, these were part of a larger case that the church as a whole had to change its position on homosexuality. Inclusionist delegates frequently brought up the church's rejection over time of its earlier support of slavery, its racism and its sexism in order to argue that the UMC should be loving, humble and courageous enough to change its stance on homosexuality. One delegate began by pointing out that the Methodist Church had been humbled over slavery and segregation, and reminded the committee that a hundred years earlier people had said the church would fall to pieces over allowing laity to be General Conference delegates. In the 1950s, she said, the ordination of women was at stake;

in 2000, women were routinely ordained. After calling the church "stiff-necked," this delegate said Methodists had embarrassed themselves and the God of Jesus Christ many times, and closed by urging the committee to claim the Christian value of humility.

The use of humility language was only one example of the inclusionist insistence that openness to change was not secular, but rather biblical and faithful. During the committee debate, one delegate said that, while Scripture had primacy, God was not dead and God's revelations continued to this day. This delegate described the Bible as a story of progress, progress in understanding what God wants us to be. The committee secretary described three scriptural truths that sustained her, the second of which was the promise that God was always calling people to a future beyond what they could grasp in the present. The UMC bishop mentioned in Chapter Two who preached on having been wrong in condemning homosexuality titled his sermon, "Doing a New Thing." Both the title and the sermon drew on the Bible in applying a text attributed to the prophet Isaiah to the homosexuality struggle.[22] Tuell (2000) claimed in the sermon that "the God we worship is not a static God, capable only of speaking to us from two, three or four thousand years ago. Rather, God is living, alive in this moment, revealing new truth to us here, now, in [the year 2000]." A pastor contributing to an inclusionist anthology argued that "our response to living Scriptures and to a God who is involved and engaged in continuing and unfolding revelatory activity, has made the Church, and will make the Church, a dynamic and changing community/institution."[23] Inclusionists made the case for the religious legitimacy of supporting change, not just because they believed in it, but because they were mindful of needing to convince others that change need not be unscriptural or un-Godly.

INCLUSIONIST AND EVANGELICAL "CULTURE WARS" COMMENTS

> [Conservatives] have a perception of *the* truth and unless you're lined up with that exactly than you're not in it. And if you're not in *the* truth, you're not in God. . . . [Our perspective is that] you believe differently, but just don't kill people, don't legislate your beliefs on us, but they feel like if the legislation's not there, then they're being legislated against, because they don't allow any room. There's no room in there for difference. There's no room in there for disagreement. It's *the* truth. Period. (Inclusionist caucus leader)

As noted in Chapter Three, one way a researcher can demonstrate the validity of her analysis is to ask whether participants in the research find the analysis plausible. In the case of the culture wars approach, participants

did not merely find it plausible; they independently proposed that such an approach described their struggle. Conservatives, moderates and inclusionists all used some variant of culture wars analysis in claiming that the two sides read the Bible or understood truth differently, even though I did not hear any of them use the phrase "culture wars" itself.

Conservatives and evangelicals spoke extensively about the differing "worldviews" within Christianity. For example, one self-defined evangelical conservative said that the question being played out across the denomination was, "do we believe that God meant what God revealed to those who wrote the Bible, or do we say no, we have a better idea, our sociopolitical knowledge, our sociopolitical expertise has taught us that we know better than what the writers of the Bible knew?" Similar reflections came from a former homosexual and a leader of a conservative caucus:

> [There] are two worldviews in Christianity. One worldview says that Scripture is an open narrative, open for much difference of interpretation. That would be the more relativistic view. Second view would be the more traditional view, which would be [that] the Bible is the inspired Word of God. And I think the issue of homosexuality is the tip of the iceberg. I think the bedrock foundational problem is a doctrinal problem. If you believe in the rulebook of Christians, as the fundamentalists would say, which is the Bible, then it proscribes against homosexuality. If you believe in the relativistic part of it, then that book, which is one of many books, is really open to much latitude and interpretation. [Homosexuality is an issue because homosexuals are] probably the only group of people that, from the left, are asking the right to bless and anoint them. The right can't bless and anoint that group because they believe that that's a sinful condition, not unlike all the other sinful conditions but . . . adulterers and extortionists aren't asking for a special blessing. (Former homosexual)

> There cannot be very much wiggle room on [homosexuality in the church] because this goes to the very root of a theological issue and the theological issue has to do with authority, as to what we believe is right and wrong, what's true and not true, and this again takes us to the level of, what's the role of Scripture within our denomination? [Most] of us would say, if we take this piece and say we can do as we please with it, than what we're really doing is undermining the issue of authority and revelation within the Christian faith for United Methodists. In a sense, it's a political fight or conflict, but there's an essential or central theological issue at stake. (Conservative caucus leader)

One moderate similarly told me that "the lack of middle ground [on homosexuality] is because the Bible is either true or not," while another moderate contrasted the Bible with personal experience as "the final arbiter of truth:"

> For those who take the Bible as the final arbiter of truth . . . to change on this position means you give up not only on this position but on every other position on which they believe the Bible speaks clearly. People on the other side, the argument is, our experience tells us that the Bible is in fact incorrect in this position and therefore they're saying, my experience is more important than the Scripture.

Inclusionists often mentioned the "Bible contest" at the heart of the struggle, as one delegate recently put it. An inclusionist bishop (Sprague 2002: 20) argued that "the real issue is biblical authority," and an AMAR member said at General Conference 2000 that the issue of biblical infallibility was the real lightning rod. In a thoughtful analysis, Griffith (1995) argued that reconciling pastors should "give a cheer for our Evangelical brothers and sisters" for affirming that the homosexuality struggle was about the erosion of the authority of Scripture, not simply about homosexuality. Griffith approved of the fact that inclusionists "have moved far beyond the idea that the Bible is exclusively normative and literally authoritative for our faith." Finally, the usefulness of a culture wars approach in making sense of the conflict could hardly be better demonstrated than by the comment of one delegate during committee debate; this delegate drew a distinction between those who knew how to vote on the issue because the Bible told them so, and those who voted the other way because of real-world knowledge.

LIMITS OF A CULTURE WARS ANALYSIS

For all the evidence supporting Hunter's thesis, other studies of denominational homosexuality struggles suggest some of its limitations. For example, Weston's (1999) study of the PCUSA struggle showed that the outcome of one particular component of the struggle benefited neither "left" nor "right" (as one might expect in a culture war) but rather the "loyalist center," the overwhelming group of Presbyterians that were "loyal to the church *as it is*."[24] Weston tracked the denomination's 1997 passage of an amendment requiring "fidelity and chastity" for clergy that effectively excluded clergy in same-sex relations, finding that denominational loyalists (equivalent to Coyner's "Methodist middle") forced those on the "extreme ends" to compete for the loyalists' favor. The amendment itself, Weston notes, was designed to end attempts to ordain "practicing" lesbians and gay men while actually preserving current "don't-ask-don't-tell" institutional practices. By this analysis, the passage of the "fidelity and chastity" amendment revealed a "three-party" competition under the expected "left-right" debate.

Wellman (1999) agreed with Weston both in rejecting a simple "two-sided" analysis and in claiming that the loyalist middle within mainline Protestant denominations is playing a crucial role in homosexuality struggles. He argued, for example, that Hunter's two categories (orthodox

and progressive) should be replaced with a four-category breakdown ranging from exclusivist through inclusivist, in which the United Methodist Church is best understood as semi-exclusivist. Wellman's rationale for this argument is partly that loyalist mainline Protestants tend to hold a "don't gay-bash, don't condone" combination of values, whereas Hunter's work suggests that progressivists would both "condone" homosexuality and object to gay-bashing while the orthodox would condemn homosexuality without necessarily speaking up very loudly to condemn gay-bashing.

While I found support for the usefulness of a culture wars analysis in making sense of the struggle, I also noticed some limitations of such an analysis beyond those discussed by Weston and Wellman. For example, given the evangelical reliance on biblical passages to justify retaining the homosexuality prohibitions, it is interesting that evangelicals did not hew to the Bible in other instances that might have been considered parallels, such as the comment attributed to Jesus that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God;[25] Good News does not seem to feel the need to protect the church from rich people. Moreover, as a number of inclusionist delegates pointed out, the Gospels report Jesus as speaking explicitly against divorce while remaining silent on homosexuality,[26] yet UMC pastors now regularly blessed the marriages of previously divorced people. If the Bible is the source of timeless truth, why would Christians ignore Jesus' own comments on wealth and divorce?[27] An orthodox morality might be thought to require a more consistent adoption of biblical prescriptions and proscriptions than I found among the conservatives and evangelicals.[28]

Moreover, as noted in Chapter One, a culture wars-type focus on different approaches to moral truth does not sufficiently explain the inclusionists' actions at General Conference 2000. People can be deeply committed to their understandings of morality without closing down church assemblies over them; the depth of inclusionist pain and anger seems to require further explanation.

The next step is to take seriously the inclusionist emotions on display at General Conference 2000 while juxtaposing them with conservative comments about homosexuality as "yucky" and about (liberal) California as the state of "fruits, nuts, and flakes." The first corrective to an overly simplistic culture wars approach is thus an analysis of homophobia and heterosexism in the United Methodist Church; this subject is the topic of Chapter Six.

6 Analytic Perspectives
Homophobia and Heterosexism

> I've struggled all my life to stay a member of the church. I think I've lived a good life, and I care about others. I volunteer for as much as I can. I truly believe the Bible's story about God and Jesus. But deep inside I know that I'm a worthless person because the church's view of homosexuality has told me so over and over again. No one knows I'm gay, and I've never had a sexual relationship with anyone. I'm afraid of what God will do to me. There's no way God can love me if my whole being is sinful and corrupt because I'm gay. Really, I just wish I would die.[1]

This chapter begins with two ironies. First, I draw on the inclusionists' experiences of homophobia and heterosexism to develop an inequality analysis, despite the fact that UM conservatives and evangelicals, as noted earlier, are at best suspicious of experience. Second, the approach I take here is political in the sense of being concerned with the unequal distribution of status in the church, despite the fact that one of the harshest critiques the conservatives and evangelicals can make of the inclusionists is that they are "political." Therefore, should any conservatives or evangelicals happen upon this material, they will likely find it unconvincing if not actually a confirmation of their position.

Why, then, build an analysis on experience? First, it is not possible to understand the stakes for the inclusionists without walking a mile in their shoes. Second, as discussed later in this chapter, part of the disrespect levied on all LGBT people in homophobic and heterosexist societies is that LGBT accounts of our own lives are not given priority over other, "official" accounts. Particularly where religion is concerned, heterosexuals are authorized to say what our lives mean and how we should live; we are not allowed to be experts on ourselves. Taking LGBT experience seriously in building an analysis of homophobia and heterosexism thus challenges LGBT devaluation.

STARTING WITH LGBT EXPERIENCES

To be an LGBT UM is to be forbidden to fulfill your calling to the ministry unless you are willing to live a lie or remain celibate. It is to be prohibited

from having the church you love bless your relationship with a person who pledges to honor, respect, cherish and love you. Ultimately, it is to be told that a basic element of who you are is incompatible with another basic element of who you are.

To be an LGBT UM is to learn that an inclusionist pastor had a note slipped under his door, reading "Calling all queers! Calling all gays! There will be a meeting at Creech Homosexual Church . . . All weirdoes invited."[2] It is to hear an evangelical at General Conference compare homosexuality to wife-swapping, and to read the opinion of the Unofficial Confessing Movement (n.d.) that holy unions "show contempt for the holy institution of matrimony." To be an LGBT UM is to find out that your congregation was "dis-invited" from a visit planned to a Tennessee retreat center because your congregation has LGBT members and "there are children" at the retreat center. It is to hear a gay Filipino weep over the 33 years it took him to accept his sexuality as he describes having a minister pray over him to remove the Sodomic demon that "caused" his homosexuality. Or perhaps it is to be that gay Filipino. To be an LGBT UM is to hear the story of a man who was endlessly harassed for being gay and who ultimately succumbed to a heart attack after his house was burned down.

To be an LGBT Presbyterian or Lutheran is to learn that you are failing to live up to the church's standards; that "God's intention for sexuality is the marriage of one man to one woman in lifelong fidelity;" that the centrist solution on homosexuality should be to "acknowledge and accept [homosexual] exceptions without making them normative;" and that while you "may be able to serve this church and the gospel well," the traditional prohibitive language should be left intact while requiring additional steps for granting exceptions, in order to respect "what the church believes to be the extra-ordinary nature of these calls."[3] In short, to be an LGBT mainline Protestant is to learn that your sexuality falls short of both the church's and God's expectations, and that you have to have a far greater gift for ministry than your heterosexual colleagues in order to be considered for the pastorate; even if your call is "extra-ordinary," your ordaining body may still choose not to ordain you on principle.

To be an LGBT Protestant (or indeed an LGBT person more generally) is to have your experiences discounted by others, to have your religiosity and spirituality defined as somehow inauthentic and your sense of yourself as a good, moral, decent, loving person denied. A British lesbian[4] has put this well: "when lesbian and gay people look into the Scriptures we do not recognize ourselves in the mirrors normally held up to us." A gay man observes that what he and other LGBT people of faith "experience as genuine in our hearts is regarded by many Christians with suspicion, even hostility," and asks, "What have we done to earn this lack of respect, this marginalization? Who are we to have our faith diminished and scorned?" (Hazel 2000: 9). One ally[5] refers to religious homophobia as "a language world of violative definition and character assault," indicating the deep devaluation faced by

LGBT Christians. Such treatment both derives from and reinforces disempowerment in the church; as Alexander and Preston (1996: 103–104) have noted, "As long as non-gays have the power to define who gays/lesbians are from their exclusively heterosexual perspective [and to] vote on how they will define what it means to be gay/lesbian, [lesbians and gays] are still left out of the loop, without a say about their own realities."

To be an LGBT Protestant is to experience what one inclusionist at General Conference called "spiritual violence," which he termed the worst kind of violence because not only did heterosexuals hate LGBT people, LGBT people came to hate themselves. To be an LGBT Christian is to be at risk of cognitive dissonance because your spirituality and your sexuality are in tension with each other. To be an LGBT Christian is to be perpetually on the defensive, guilty until proven innocent. To be an LGBT Christian may mean having the experiences of the man quoted at the beginning of the chapter, and, like him, wishing that you could "just die."[6]

Such are the experiences of inclusionists in different denominations; hopefully they explain something of the pain and anger of LGBT UMs and their allies. For ultimately, to be an LGBT mainline Protestant is, at least part of the time, to experience disrespect and devaluation from what should have been your source of greatest joy. It is, perhaps, to feel that the church has reversed Jesus' dictum and is offering her children stones instead of bread.[7]

These descriptions are not offered from a neutral perspective. They are informed by my own experiences and by my emotional responses to these experiences. It is not pleasant to hear one's sexuality described as "yucky," and it is infuriating to watch delegates laugh at a description of California as full of "fruits." If neutrality is really necessary to understand the perspective of the inclusionists, I am not in a position to offer it. If, on the other hand, it is possible to treat one's own emotions as data in understanding the emotions of others who are similar in important ways, my experiences may be useful. The challenge of starting an analysis with experiences and emotions lies in making sure that the analysis moves beyond experiences and emotions to focus on larger social processes. Having indicated something of what it may be like to be an LGBT mainline Protestant, I now turn to those processes.

HOMOPHOBIA, HETEROSEXISM AND HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE

The sociological study of social inequality begins with a presumption that all people are of equal value and should have equal life opportunities. Since this presumption is clearly not borne out in reality, sociologists ask how it comes to happen that some groups of people face diminished life chances and disrespect based on a group identity that they share. I thus begin here

with what quantitative researchers would call a "null hypothesis:" that there is no moral difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality, and that the substantially different treatment of lesbian, gay and bisexual people requires explanation. In the case of the UMC struggle, the most relevant question is not why LGBT UMs are treated differently since those holding the line can appeal to the Bible and tradition to justify their position, but rather how the church uses the same social mechanisms as "the world" to bolster its theological stance.[8]

While the term "homophobia" commonly describes strong negative responses (fear, disgust, anger, hatred) to homosexuality and LGBT people on the part of heterosexuals, I use it here as shorthand for the devaluing and disadvantaging of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals through personal, interpersonal, cultural and institutional means. This broader definition leaves space for negative personal responses while also acknowledging that people can act in ways that have antigay outcomes without (for example) being disgusted by homosexuality or afraid of LGBT people.[9]

Homophobia as I have defined it could not exist without a social system based on the assumption that all people are or should be heterosexual. I use the term heterosexism to describe this system,[10] and the phrase "heterosexual privilege" to describe the "special rights" that heterosexuals are socially granted simply by virtue of being heterosexual. These include legal, social and cultural "rights," and heterosexuals tend to be unaware of them. The ability to be married legally, with the status and financial rewards this incurs, is a good example of a heterosexual privilege of which heterosexuals are increasingly aware, due to the past ten years of public debate over same-sex marriage.

Many of the UM conservatives and evangelicals with whom I spoke would openly agree that there is heterosexual privilege in the church. They would, however, justify it by claiming that God has sanctioned "heterosexual privilege" because heterosexuality is privileged as God's norm and ideal for human life. An example of this position can be found in a conservative Presbyterian statement released after the presbyteries rejected the denominational prohibition of holy unions for the second time; the statement read, in part, "these [holy union] efforts will not cease until that union instituted by God and blessed by our Lord Jesus Christ has been stripped of all special honor and recognition."[11] Here, the conservative claim is that marriage between a man and a woman ought to receive "special honor and recognition;" holy unions should not be treated as spiritually or otherwise equivalent to male-female marriages. Equally important in this statement is the justification for treating male-female marriage preferentially, which is that God instituted it and Jesus Christ blessed it. By my reading, the statement implies that marriage must be protected by formally forbidding holy unions in the church. From the conservative perspective, heterosexual privilege is not a problem but a commandment. This position makes sense in the context of the conservatives' larger approach to Christianity and the

Bible, but I need not accept it as an accurate description of reality, as indeed I do not.

Wolfe (1998: 315) observes that "the new middle-class morality—with the conspicuous exception of its view of homosexuality—is . . . accommodating, pluralistic, tolerant, and expansive." Why should such a morality cease to be "accommodating, pluralistic, tolerant, and expansive" when it comes to homosexuality? Wolfe himself provides a troubling answer in claiming (ibid., 269) that "American society is dominated by the ideas of the reasonable majority: people who believe themselves to be modest in their appetites, quiet in their beliefs, and restrained in their inclinations. They want the world to be organized in such a way that their reasonableness counts." Such reasonableness sounds appropriate indeed, until one considers that it is the very people most convicted of their reasonableness who disapprove of homosexuality. If Wolfe is right, homosexuality is in some sense understood by "middle America" to be unreasonable, immodest, "noisy" and unrestrained. This point leads to the question of why homosexuality in particular should be so fraught and troubling.

THE "ICK FACTOR"

If you watch children of a certain age playing, eventually you will see a child rebuked by the phrase, "that's so gay." You will never hear the child told that his or her actions are "so thievish;" despite the prohibition against stealing being the eighth of the Ten Commandments, "thief" is not an epithet used to insult people. Similarly, you will never read a news story about someone getting beaten up for being a liar, despite the ninth commandment prohibiting bearing false witness. If you attend a hockey game and a goalie misses the save, the fans of that team will not show their discontent by yelling that the goalie is an adulterer, though the seventh commandment prohibits adultery. You will be hard-pressed to find a term equivalent to "fag" for someone who does not honor their parents, despite the fifth commandment to honor one's father and mother.[12] In short, something about homosexuality makes it worse in many Christians' minds than actions specifically forbidden by the Ten Commandments. While there are a number of components to this "something," the "ick factor" plays an important role.

The "ick factor" is a term for "the revulsion many [heterosexual] men and women feel at the thought of sexual activity between people of their own sex,"[13] and homophobia is deepened by the presence of this factor. While the mechanisms of inequality discussed below play central roles in inclusionist experiences, the ick factor sharpens the sting of shame and anger felt by LGBT UMs.

When a woman at the Transforming Congregations press conference says, "We have a friend's son who's a *homo*," the loathing and disgust is

obvious in her voice, as is the devaluation of the friend's son in question. When an African delegate calls "the problem" something that is "yucky," the ick factor is clearly at play. When an African bishop calls "homosexualism" not merely unbiblical but "indecent," something abhorred by nature and not even easily mentioned among unbelievers, something more than reliance on the handful of biblical "clobber passages"[14] is going on. Ick factor moments contribute to the inclusionist sense of injustice, and bolster conservatives and evangelicals in their attempts to hold the line on homosexuality.

MASTER STATUS

When sociologist Howard Becker (1963: 33) needed an example to explain his understanding of a master status as one that "overrides all other statuses and [has] a certain priority," he observed that "the fact that one is a physician or middle-class . . . will not protect one from being treated as a Negro first and any of those other things second." While the term "master status" sounds relatively neutral, it is generally used to describe the experience of "being responded to, first and foremost, in terms of . . . membership in [a] devalued category" (Schur 1984: 24).

Where homophobia and heterosexism flourish, sexuality can easily become such a master status. LGBT people have often found that their sexuality renders them unfit parents, soldiers and spouses (among other statuses) in the eyes of society. In the eyes of mainline Protestant denominations, the UMC among them, master status as a "homosexual" frequently seems to render one unfit for the clergy.

Several other good examples of sexuality as a limiting master status in Christianity come from outside the UMC struggle. For example, Mel White, founder of Soulforce, observed in his autobiography (1994: 255–6) that "in spite of my graduate degrees in ministry and twenty-five years of Christian service as a pastor, a seminary professor, a writer of best-selling religious books, and a producer of prizewinning religious films, admitting I was gay ended all chances of continued service" to the church. Similarly, an ELCA Discipline Hearing Committee, in ruling to remove a gay pastor from his church's clergy roster, "acknowledge[d] and admire[d] the gifts for ministry that Pastor Sabin has brought to Lord of Life congregation," but "[did] not find that the applicable Definitions and Guidelines permit[ted] Pastor Sabin's gifts of ministry either to outweigh or to excuse the violation" of the section that precludes "practicing homosexuals from the ordained ministry" of the ELCA.[15] Put differently, the fact that the pastor had clear gifts for his work and was benefiting his congregation paled in comparison to his master status as a "practicing homosexual." More recently, at the same time as an evangelical Anglican asked, "Can the gay advocate rise above sectional self-interest to speak to the *whole* Church of its calling?" gay Episcopal priest Gene Robinson, in preparation for his consecration

as bishop, said, "the thing I am most eager to be is a good bishop, not a gay bishop."[16] From the perspective of the Anglican Communion in Africa and Asia, Bishop Robinson will never be able to be anything but a "gay bishop." In their eyes, his sexuality trumps his spirituality, his pastoral skills, his dedication to the church, and any other factors that might make him an ideal bishop.

LGBT UMs face the deep challenge of symbolizing such unchurchly things as politics in the eyes of other UMs, an issue covered later in this chapter. Such symbolization ties back to sexuality as a master status because it leads to a secondary, equally problematic master status for LGBT UMs as political extremists. Here, the presumed devotion of LGBT UMs to political activism trumps their daily religiosity and commitment to the denomination in the view of other UMs, denying their own accounts of their lives and rendering them problematic as Christians.[17]

I found many examples of theological traditionalism and social moderation among the LGBT UMs I met at General Conference 2000. From the hymns that they sang at worship to some of their discussions with me about Wesleyan images of grace, LGBT UMs were not as a whole substantially different from evangelicals in certain ways. After hearing a gay pastor say that the Bible was his life, I asked him and another gay pastor whether they considered themselves theological moderates. They replied that they were tickled to be called moderates, and one said his theology was not moderate but biblical. Had they taken off their lesbian/gay buttons, rainbow crosses and other paraphernalia, a number of the LGBT UMs would have been undistinguishable from UM Decision 2000 in self-presentation; the heterosexual inclusionists looked far more like stereotypical leftist activists than those they supported. Sexually, too, many of the LGBT UMs defied conservative expectations of them. I met over a dozen closeted celibate lesbian or gay pastors, and every bisexual UM I met was either celibate or in a monogamous, heterosexual relationship. One man told me his lover had died of AIDS-related complications and that he had remained celibate since his lover's death. For some people, he said, there is only one special love, and he had been blessed to find his even if only temporarily.

Watching the inclusionist strategizing and protests at General Conference 2000 was also a somewhat misleading introduction to LGBT UMs, in that it did not represent their church activities and priorities during the majority of their time. Repeatedly, when I asked LGBT UMs about their lives beyond the inclusion struggle, they talked about teaching Sunday school, working on spiritual development, singing in the church choir and other routine aspects of their walk with Christ (as several put it). These encounters are supported by Comstock's (1996: 91) finding that of the LGBT UMs he interviewed, 82% had been or were involved in service or ministry within the denomination. Among the most common activities reported to Comstock: teaching Sunday school, leading worship, participating in the choir or otherwise contributing musically or artistically, joining or leading youth

groups, assisting with community projects, mission and outreach work, and visiting ill congregants.

The master status imposed upon LGBT UMs as sexuality-driven political extremists misses the extent to which, for the most part, they are moderates when they are not carrying out protests at General Conference or preparing for the denominational gathering. My point is not that LGBT UMs deserve full inclusion on the basis of being moderates, for not all of them are; some share progressive and feminist theological commitments with heterosexual inclusionists. Rather, if there is an ironic element to this failure of recognition, it is that LGBT UMs are not merely denied full inclusion on the basis of their sexuality; they are punished precisely because they are so committed to the denomination and to Wesleyan Christianity. Their daily United Methodist lives, and in a different way their presence at General Conference, demonstrate a devotion to the UMC mirroring that of the conservatives and evangelicals. Yet, because of what their sexuality is made to mean as a politicized master status, LGBT UMs routinely endure others' doubts about their Christian commitment even as this commitment forces them to undergo a debasing ritual of rejection every four years. When it comes time for General Conference delegates to vote on the incompatibility language and the homosexuality prohibitions, it does not matter how many casseroles LGBT UMs have contributed to church potlucks, how many Sunday school classes they have taught, or how fervently they believe in the salvific work of Jesus Christ. The votes mark them simply as "homosexual activists."

MORAL ALCHEMY

An inclusionist Presbyterian parent argued that those asking to have their relationships blessed "are not strangers or aliens, they are our children who we have baptized and confirmed. They have not changed. What has changed is our perception of them; they are seen as outsiders and as odious."[18] These words point to another important mechanism of social inequality, namely the process of "moral alchemy" by which "the same behavior [is] differently evaluated according to the person who exhibits it," such that in-group virtues become out-group vices.[19] For example, an inclusionist made the following observation about holy unions:

> [Two] people who love and care for each other look for a way to declare their commitment before God and the community [with] the full backing and enthusiasm of the church [and] with prayerful ceremony, joy, and good fun. They represent the basic family value: enduring, committed, monogamous love. *Unless they happen to be of the same sex*. Then all bets are off.[20]

Moral alchemy is a particularly important mechanism of homophobia and heterosexism. That which is good when heterosexuals do it ("dating") is bad when lesbian, gay and bisexual people do it ("promiscuity"). Perhaps the best-known example involves the term "flaunting it," which is never applied to heterosexuals but can be used when a lesbian, gay or bisexual person (a) holds hands with a sweetheart in public, (b) has a picture of their sweetheart on their desk at work, or (c) doesn't change pronouns when describing their romantic weekend. Table 6.1 shows how moral alchemy works for several sexuality-related topics in American society.

Claims about LGBT people wanting "special rights" also provide a good example of moral alchemy. With regard to most "special rights" that LGBT people want, our context for wanting them is that we already receive special treatment, but in reverse; call it a "special lack of rights" compared to heterosexuals. When we want to legally marry our partners, it's a "special right;" when heterosexuals want to marry their partners, it's a normal and reasonable desire that can be fulfilled. Perhaps this outcome is not surprising given that LGBT people ourselves are thought to be a "special interest" group whereas heterosexuals are not—a perfect case of moral alchemy at work.

Moral alchemy is visible in the UMC inclusion struggle. For example, inclusionist readings of the Bible were understood by moderates to be self-interested while conservative readings of the Bible were understood by moderates to be Christian. During the committee debate, a delegate reminded the committee that people don't talk about the "practice" of heterosexu-

Table 6.1 Moral Alchemy and Homosexuality: Selected Examples

Issue	*For LGBT People*	*For Heterosexual People*
Relationships are . . .	about sex	about love
Marriage is . . .	a threat to the family	what makes a family
If your partner is publicly visible, you are . . .	flaunting it	demonstrating love
Wanting/adopting children is . . .	selfish, given the antigay prejudice they will face	normal and even generous
You have sex in order to . . .	have an orgasm	bond as a couple and possibly have children
The way to get your name in the paper is to . . .	have consensual sex in the wrong place	get married
Legal marriage and military service are . . .	special rights	the benefit and burden of being an American citizen
In summary, you have . . .	a lifestyle	a life

Source: Rochlin 1984; personal experiences

ality as though it were divorced from the rest of who a person was; other heterosexual inclusionists discussed wearing signs that read, "self-avowed, practicing heterosexual" during the plenary protest. An inclusionist pastor protested that the 1998 Judicial Council ruling against holy unions "[singled] out 'homosexuals' for special discrimination."[21] In one of its handouts for delegates, Affirmation (2000a) referred directly to moral alchemy without using the term, and tied the practice to structural inequality:

> For years we've been hearing language about gay/lesbian folk and "special rights." Our *Discipline* bears out another reality within United Methodism. Lesbians and gay men labor under the weight of special prohibitions. Do we want to celebrate our family commitments with a faith community? There's a special prohibition for us. Does God call us to ordained ministry? Another special prohibition . . . Some states used to have a whole set of special prohibitions for some of their citizens. We called them Jim Crow laws. We knew they discriminated. When will we drop our gay Jim Crow laws?

The result of a successful application of moral alchemy is that out-group members find themselves in an impossible situation, a point that Merton acknowledges in his (1949) introduction to the concept. When an out-group holds the same values as an in-group and tries to act on those values, the action is interpreted as stemming from a different motive entirely, one that is suspect; out-groups are thus "damned if they do." However, should an out-group reject the values or actions of an in-group for any reason, the rejection itself is taken as evidence of the out-group's inferiority; they are "damned if they don't." Moral alchemy is an in-group's ultimate act of bad faith toward an out-group. For example, marriage is a social good, except when same-sex couples want access to it, at which point it becomes a threat to society. But let same-sex couples publicly reject marriage and it becomes a social good again, while they are tagged as selfish, promiscuous hedonists. Conservative UMs participate in this process; one Good News member told me that she was very concerned about "the ravages of AIDS" despite acknowledging that (1) lesbians are less likely to be exposed to HIV than heterosexual women, and (2) the same men who got AIDS might have stayed home and been monogamous had the church brought them fully into its life through, for example, holy unions. The catch-22 for gay men in this example is that neither holy unions nor "promiscuity" are acceptable. LGBT people facing such circumstances may well feel that they are trapped in a no-win situation, intensifying their frustration substantially.

LGBT SYMBOLIZATION

Gay philosopher Richard Mohr (2005: 2) argues that LGBT people, "at least for much of the recent past, have served in the culture's mind as its

paradigm of deviance, its exemplar of degeneracy . . . In the culture's mind, gayness has served as evil made concrete and given life." Similarly, in his culture wars analysis, Hunter notes that homosexuality generates so much raw emotion because "few other issues challenge the traditional assumptions of what nature will allow, the boundaries of the moral order, and finally the ideals of middle-class family life more radically."[22] A gay philosopher and an evangelical sociologist thus both acknowledge that homosexuality has a symbolic component that contributes to its problematic status in heterosexual society. One reason gay men may get beaten up while liars do not is that gay men represent something for the men beating them up: gender deviance, rebellion against God, lack of masculinity, even the possibility that the attacker might find the gay man attractive at some buried level. Liars, in contrast, don't serve as symbols; they just lie. Eventually, the degree to which homosexuality is socially rejected comes back to the idea that, as Mohr puts it, "gayness has served as evil made concrete and given life."

Homosexuality serves as a symbol in the church as well as in society. It is yet another indignity faced by LGBT Christians that, despite their understanding of themselves as human beings, others insist on treating them and their sexuality symbolically. Consider, for example, a Presbyterian leader's argument about maintaining the prohibition on ordaining lesbians and gay men:

> [Sexuality] is used to define who we are as persons . . . In discussing sexuality, we are really asking fundamental questions, such as, How can we know what it means to be authentically human?. . . . Are there norms that govern the behavior of all persons? The question about homosexuality is difficult because unwittingly we have made it the vehicle by which all other fundamental questions must be answered. The issue of homosexual ordination may be too fragile a vehicle to carry that much weight.[23]

I suspect that many LGBT Presbyterians (and United Methodists) would be quick to say that they would like nothing better than for the church to jettison its symbolisms and just ordain them. For various reasons, however, such an outcome is not in the short-term prognosis for the church. In the remainder of this chapter I consider some reasons for this.

To understand more fully how LGBT UMs might be symbolized, I turned to Sered's (1997, 1999) analysis of sexism in religion.[24] Sered differentiates between "women" as people with more or less ability to act as agents of their own lives, and the symbolic construct of "Woman." She further observes that, "although 'Woman' may have little or no grounding in the real experiences of 'women,' when conflict arises over the role or status of 'women,' religious leaders often respond to 'Woman' rather than 'women.'" An important reason why religious leaders respond in this way is that "religious conflicts tend to be, by definition, conflicts over symbols

[as] the currency of religion." The upshot of this process of symbolization is that women in religion routinely face tension between their experiences as people and others' responses to them as symbols. One might visualize Sered's distinction between symbol and agent as a continuum; the more women are responded to as moral agents, equivalent to men, the greater their religious opportunities. In contrast, the more women are responded to as symbols rather than agents, the more their agency is limited and the less they are in control of their faith lives (for example, in terms of access to religious authority).

If Sered's distinction between "women" and "Woman" holds for sexuality as well as gender, it may help explain negative responses both to "homosexuality" (the symbol) in general and to LGBT people (the symbolized bearers of homosexuality) in particular. Some of Sered's points seem to translate well from gender to sexuality. For example, "homosexual," with all its connotations, has "little or no grounding" in the real experiences of the LGBT people I know, or whose writings I have read. In terms of the UMC struggle, a moderate United Methodist encountering some of the LGBT UMs I met during an average Sunday worship might not think anything of them, and might not even know they were not heterosexual.

How does LGBT location on a "symbolization continuum" affect treatment of LGBT people and LGBT access to rights and opportunities? Recent Gallup Poll data on a number of homosexuality-related topics supports the ideas that (1) the general public is more likely to support "homosexuals" than "homosexuality," and (2) poll items in which "homosexuals" or "homosexuality" represent or stand for something larger are precisely those poll items where public support for LGBT people and issues is lowest. In 2007, 89 percent of respondents agreed that "homosexuals should have equal rights in terms of job opportunities." In this poll item, "homosexuals" are simply people, and the abstract idea of "equal rights in employment" seems unthreatening to Americans.[25] Ninety percent of respondents in 2005 agreed that "homosexuals should be hired for salespersons."[26] Here, too, the poll item focuses on people, and the profession "salesperson" does not seem "incompatible" with homosexuality.

While nine-tenths of Americans are comfortable with the idea of a lesbian or gay salesperson, only 76 percent agreed that "homosexuals should be hired for the Armed Forces" and only 49 percent agreed that "homosexuals should be hired for clergy" according to a 2005 survey. Why the distinction? Being a soldier or a pastor is not merely a career like being a salesperson; both of these occupations represent larger entities. The military symbolizes patriotism; a soldier represents the United States of America in a way that a shoe salesperson simply does not. Similarly, a pastor represents God, holiness, moral leadership, and even Christianity. If Americans outside the UMC share the popular United Methodist belief that "homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching," it is not surprising that they are reluctant to ordain openly gay and lesbian people. Indeed, it is a

measure of homophobia that so many heterosexual Americans do not find LGBT people worthy of shouldering these weighty symbols of nation and religion. In some sense, LGBT people must stand for bad things in the public eye precisely because we are not allowed to stand for the military and religious good.

Poll items that shift from "homosexuals" to "homosexuality" show a further drop in public support. Of the items discussed in the previous paragraph, only the one on "homosexual clergy" rates lower than any of the "homosexuality" items. In 2007, 59 percent of Americans agreed that "homosexual relations should be legal" and 57 percent agreed that "homosexuality should be considered an acceptable alternative lifestyle." Most telling, slightly fewer Americans than support "homosexual clergy" agree that "homosexual relations are morally acceptable" (47 percent in 2007) and that "marriages between same-sex couples should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages" (46 percent in 2007). Morality is symbolic of social order more generally, while marriage represents the gender order and societal stability. Because these are all deeply valued social goods, the extent to which homosexuality is considered immoral, and the fact that marriage is defined as a heterosexual institution, demonstrate the negativity with which homosexuality is viewed.[27]

While UM conservatives, evangelicals and moderates did not say that heterosexuality and homosexuality stood for valued and devalued qualities in so many words, their comments and writings suggested this belief. Table 6.2 provides selected examples of homosexuality's apparent symbolism in the minds of those who opposed full LGBT inclusion. The language I encountered suggested that homosexuality stood for (among other things) "the world," selfish individualism, politics and activism, faithlessness, idolatry, carnality, darkness, sinfulness, low or no standards, gender breakdown, and chaos. This list is striking in a number of ways. It means that conservatives, evangelicals and moderates experience homosexuality as a threat to both Christianity and the social order more generally. With such a symbolic weight on their backs, inclusionists are hard-pressed to demonstrate that they are good Christians and productive members of society, which in turn supports the inclinations of any moderates present to vote with the conservatives on behalf of church and social order.

Several symbolic themes appeared multiple times in the UMC struggle, among them homosexuality as political. "Homosexuals" were frequently contrasted with "the Methodist middle" and characterized as "the left" or the "extreme left," as with Bishop Coyner's (1998) comment that "Those in the Methodist Middle . . . know people who are homosexuals and who struggle to be faithful Christians." Such a comment excludes the possibility that those in the "Methodist Middle" are homosexuals and faithful Christians.[28] As with Sered's women who are responded to as "Woman" despite the specifics of their lives, needs and spiritual gifts, LGBT UMs are dehumanized by virtue of being symbolized. One of the conservatives at General

Table 6.2 Homosexuality and Symbolism: Selected Examples

Heterosexuality Stands For:	*Homosexuality Stands For:*	*Example*
The church	The world	"If the life-style of Christian existence . . . can be confused with the prevailing [culture], then discipleship . . . is good for nothing" (Nacpil 2000: 1698); "Is there *any*thing in life . . . that forms the heart of what we [UMs] believe and how we live and who we are?" (interview notes)
Christian community	Selfish individualism	"It's not all about sex . . . It's not about the 'me-ism' of modern culture." (interview notes)
Religion	Politics/ activism	"[The] authoritative witness of Scripture and Christian tradition . . . has been diminished, ignored and demeaned by [those] within United Methodism who are committed to a political agenda that is destructive to the Church and to the moral fabric of society." (Unofficial Confessing Movement. n.d.)
Faith/ faithfulness	Faithlessness	"We don't believe [that] faithful Christians can hold that homosexual practice is legitimate." (interview notes)
Commitment to God's plan	Idolatry	"God's plan for humankind is not subject to modification according to the whims of personal experience or opinion" (Unofficial Confessing Movement n.d.); a delegate refers to "the golden calf of personal experience." (field notes)
Spirit	Body/flesh/ sex/carnality	A delegate talks about the life of the flesh as the playground of Satan, and about erasing the manifestations of the flesh and becoming spirit. (field notes)
Light	Darkness	A delegate says the gospel came from America to his native Africa "but now you want to take us from the light to the darkness." (field notes)
Purity/holiness/ perfection	Fallenness/ sinfulness/ corruption	A former homosexual says his position is a matter of "doctrinal purity" (field notes); a delegate says the church "called people to uncompromised holiness" (field notes); a delegate says the church should show everyone the right way to live "that's holy and good and righteous" (field notes); a delegate says that homosexuality is "not Scriptural holiness." (interview notes)

(continued)

Table 6.2 Homosexuality and Symbolism: Selected Examples *(continued)*

Heterosexuality Stands For:	*Homosexuality Stands For:*	*Example*
High standards	Low (or no) standards	The lesbian/gay pastor prohibition notes that clergy "are required to maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world" (*Book of Discipline*); a caucus leader says that "the liberals say that the church doesn't need standards" (field notes); "the church is in a different business [where] anything short of God's high standard for holy living, including sexual purity, is sin" (Case 1994: 154); a former homosexual says "we need to raise our sexual standards to meet [God's] and not lower it to meet our experience." (UM Decision 2000 2000a)
God's gendered order	Gender breakdown	A delegate speaks of the roles with which God created people as men and women in arguing against homosexuality. (field notes)
Boundaries/ Order	Loss of boundaries/ Chaos	A delegate says that our society is unraveling and our children are grasping for boundaries (field notes); "Once the church would acknowledge that there's validity in the homosexual lifestyle . . . where would you stop?" (Stammer 2000: 28); "When the authority of Scripture is no longer our starting point, anything can become acceptable—even the practice of homosexuality." (Wood 2000: 21)

Conference referred to a gay man there as a "radical pro-homosexual," and a Good News member told me that he and his allies were the moderates worldwide, while the people seeking to change the *Discipline* were on the far left. As discussed earlier, when symbolism and other mechanisms of inequality are put aside, many LGBT UMs look a lot like other UMs; nonetheless, it is profoundly difficult for them to demonstrate this to the rest of the denomination given the symbolic political assumptions with which they are greeted.

After politics, LGBT Methodists most frequently symbolize sex.[29] Moon's (2004: 156–157) study of homosexuality issues in two United Methodist congregations found that homosexuality symbolized the sexual, the physical, the embodied, the tainted, and the profane to the heterosexuals with whom she talked. At General Conference 2000, a Sacramento 68 pastor told me that the church sexualized homosexuality and desexualized heterosexuality, a process that could lead to symbolic challenges for LGBT UMs because, as a number of other inclusionists pointed out, the church as a whole is uncomfortable with sexuality in general. If United Methodists have in fact dealt with their discomfort with sex in general by desexualizing monogamous heterosexuality,

homosexuality would bear the added weight of a double symbolization, taking on heterosexuality's carnality while continuing to bear its own fleshliness.

Homosexuality is also associated with sinfulness, fallenness and corruption, both by United Methodists and others facing inclusion conflicts. Moon (2004: 165) observes that at one of the churches she studied, "insofar as members' mental pictures of homosexuality were drawn in stark opposition to everything they saw as righteous and spiritual, some gay and lesbian members found themselves struggling to show that they were not the living embodiments of sin." A General Conference 2000 delegate, who implied that he was a moderate, said that everybody was welcome but the church couldn't bless homosexuality because that would be blessing a sin, like robbery. One evangelical called homosexuality "moral inversion" and another said that it was easy for God to change these "abnormalities." A protest sign at a Southern Baptist congregation read "This church is polluted. God is not here;" the congregation was considering supporting a holy union.[30]

Perhaps above all homosexuality seems to symbolize, for both mainline Christians and Americans more generally, a total loss of boundaries and a relativism that leads to breakdown of the social order.[31] Wolfe (1998: 81), for example, predicts that, "fed up with cultural relativism, Americans may well conclude that if the distinction between right and wrong is to be applied anywhere, it should be applied here." Why would the line be drawn at homosexuality? From a conservative perspective, "if Americans are unwilling to condemn sodomy, they would presumably be unwilling to condemn anything" (Ibid., 73). That "sodomy" could be considered equivalent to murder (for example) suggests both its symbolic power and the depths of homophobia in the United States. The same tone is struck in a delegate's comment that "[w]hen the authority of Scripture is no longer our starting point, anything can become acceptable—even the practice of homosexuality" (Wood 2000: 21). This sense of homosexuality as outside the realm of morality was echoed in a delegate's question to me during a conversation at General Conference. I had casually mentioned my monogamous relationship of several years and the delegate was mystified as to why I would bother to be monogamous since I was involved in a same-sex relationship anyway. Underneath this question I sensed a deeper one: if you are going to cross the ethical border into homosexuality, why have any ethics at all? Once again, homosexuality is beyond the pale. As the Parents' Reconciling Network (2000) observes, "Too many people believe that GLBT people are fearsome mythological creatures, or subversives whose agenda is to weaken the nation's moral fiber and destroy its churches and families." If this is really a popular set of beliefs (which my findings support), it is not surprising that LGBT UMs have a hard time convincing others that they are decent human beings, let alone good Christians.

The various mechanisms of homophobia and heterosexism discussed in this chapter do not merely occur in church and society along separate but parallel tracks. Rather, the ways in which conservatives use the Bible on this issue reinforces well-ensconced societal homophobia and heterosexism, while the homophobia and heterosexism already present in society makes the evangelical approach to Scripture seem entirely reasonable to many observers and delegates. As a result, LGBT UMs remain trapped in what they experience as an intolerable situation. The next step in making sense of the inclusionists' actions at General Conference is to consider their own analysis of their situation in more depth, a task carried out in Chapter Seven.

7 Analytic Perspectives
Social Closure

Inclusionists in general and LGBT UMs in particular have a number of options when it comes to making sense of the experiences they have within the denomination. They could, in theory, decide that they had invited their own suffering by disobeying the Lord in sexual sinfulness; such a position would likely lead to the conclusion that they should solve their problems by becoming heterosexual. Such an analysis was both readily available and even promulgated by the conservative caucuses. It was, however, strongly resisted by both LGBT UMs and their heterosexual allies.

Alternately, the inclusionists could have agreed with my claim that the problems they faced were homophobia and heterosexism while determining that the solution was Christlike patience and the willingness to "take up the cross" of suffering such oppression without resisting it in any way. That inclusionists frequently referred to themselves as "fools for Christ" indicates that they compared themselves with the early apostles, who were persecuted by the Roman Empire.[1] Unlike the apostles, however, the inclusionists experienced themselves as persecuted by their own church; also unlike the apostles, inclusionists were not willing to suffer their indignities without rising up at General Conference and otherwise remaining engaged in working for denominational change.

Ultimately, the inclusionists rejected a conservative theological interpretation in favor of a progressive political one, and they chose political action over "spiritual" non-resistance when faced with the outcome of the General Conference 2000 votes. This chapter provides detailed information about the nature of the inclusionists' political analysis and justification for political action, with a special focus on social closure as a kind of conflict theory that a number of inclusionists took up informally.

Given that the lesbian/gay rights movement emerged in the context of the civil rights and other justice movements, it is not surprising that inclusionists had access to a rich collection of language and ideas from those movements. A pastor responded to the 1998 Judicial Council ruling against holy unions by arguing that the "mistreatment of gay men and lesbians by the United Methodist Church . . . is a matter of bigotry [and injustice]. To say to lesbians and gay men that they must wait for justice until [some]

future General Conference . . . is to trivialize the persecution and oppression they experience" (Creech 1998). Another pastor (Lull 1998) similarly argued that denying LGBT people "access to the church's rites that bless loving relationships between two persons committed to life-long fidelity to each other . . . discriminates against a class or category of persons defined by who they are (their 'status'). As such, this debate is about justice for all persons in the church." Affirmation (2000b) indicated among its goals that, "when necessary, we lovingly challenge and confront the policies and practices that reflect institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism." Similarly, in an essay from a point/counterpoint anthology on homosexuality in the church, Mollenkott (1994: 145–6) observed that:

> Heterosexism is akin to political "isms." . . . These "isms" establish economic and political structures . . . Such structures so pervade our society that they seem to be God's order of things. This results in great suffering for some persons, persons whose pain may be alleviated as they become aware that the structures are not God's but humanity's.

This claim is striking, for it both names and challenges directly the conservative and evangelical position that heterosexism is indeed "God's order of things." Of even more interest, several elements of the quote make it sound like something Marx might have said had Marx been mindful of sexuality-based inequality. Mollenkott draws attention to the structural nature of inequality, touches on religious justifications for inequality, and suggests that oppressed people can take action to end their suffering once they reject religious justifications for inequality.[2] Given the criticism of religion inherent in the quote, it may not be obvious that Mollenkott identifies as a Christian, but it is just such examples of self-identified Christians challenging religion that are of interest in this chapter.

When Mollenkott claims that heterosexism is "akin" to "political 'isms'" such as racism and sexism (for example), she is saying both that heterosexism works in ways similar to these other kinds of inequality and that heterosexism, like racism and sexism, causes "great suffering" to those whose lives it limits. Such a double comparison of heterosexism is similarly found in the writings of UM inclusionists. In addition to naming "institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism," Affirmation (2000b) works to overcome "the barriers that diminish our common humanity by excluding or judging people because of their race, gender, class, or physical abilities." The United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church said in its first public statement that it was "dedicated to bridging the movements to eradicate all forms of oppression and discrimination in the church" and elaborated as follows:

> We cannot and will not deny that we recognize in the experiences of our Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender brothers and sisters the resonance

> of our own journeys as people of color in the church. We see the truth in the words of Coretta Scott King when she says that the struggles for inclusion of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender people are part of the "continuing justice movement" for which Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his life. . . . We must recognize the interconnectedness of all forms of oppression . . . We will not wait on racism. We will not wait on sexism. We will not wait on neo-colonialism. We will not wait on heterosexism.[3]

An Asian pastor who became an inclusionist after moving to the United States and serving a substantially lesbian/gay congregation told the Faith and Order committee about feeling the racism right away when he came to the U.S. and said he was appreciative of white people who tried to help eliminate racism and of men who tried to help the situation of women. He followed these statements with the question of when gay and lesbian members of the church would get to be part of this community. The structure of his argument suggests that the pastor saw racism, sexism and homophobia as problematically similar.

Even the inclusionist clothing for sale at AMAR's hospitality suite took advantage of this parallel. I saw t-shirts for sale that read, "It's God's Table. Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?" The 1967 movie "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?" tells the story of two liberal white parents who had to address their racism when their daughter brought home an African-American fiancé. The t-shirt makes the point that, unlike the liberal parents who could not hide their racism when confronted with an actual African-American person who wanted to marry their daughter, God would be completely welcoming to the LGBT UMs who wanted to be part of the family, with not a hint of discomfort or prejudice. The church, in contrast, had "gay Jim Crow laws" according to several AMAR members (e.g., Lawson 2000),[4] and one Sacramento 68 pastor compared the ecclesiastical disobedience holy union to Rosa Parks' refusal to sit in the back of the bus:

> Is it our church's intention to have [Ellie and Jeanne] sit in the proverbial back of the church as Rosa Parks was made to sit in the back of the bus? If so, fine. They will be in good company. However, my past experience as a pastor . . . assures me that this cannot and will not be the case. On January 16, 1999, this church gathered in Sacramento, stood up and said, "My lesbian feet are tired of walking this road named, 'Exclusion.' My bones are weary of carrying the double standard placed upon love and union because of sexual orientation. Move on over. I'm sitting down in the front pew."[5]

While I encountered many more general examples of inclusionist inequality language, I also found that certain themes especially resonant with a social inequality analysis were used so often as to merit their own consideration.

The following section of the chapter examines the use of four of these themes: exclusion, second-class citizenship, discrimination and injustice/justice.

EXCLUSION

My initial decision to refer to LGBT United Methodists and their allies as "inclusionists" was based on my observation that the words "exclusion" and "inclusion" showed up in many of the materials produced by these caucuses. Typical here is Wulf's (1998b: 11) claim that "a form of exclusion continues with the church's declaration that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." Similarly, the Statement of Commitment signed by UM clergy willing to perform holy unions refers to the "increasingly condemnatory and exclusionary language"[6] added to the *Book of Discipline,* while the Reconciling Congregation Program's (1999b) mission statement observes that, "in principle and practice, the UM church excludes some people, particularly lesbians, gay and bisexual persons, from full participation in its life and work."

Inclusionist responses to the 1996 prohibition of holy unions were particularly likely to use the language of exclusion in criticizing the denomination's position. For example, the sermon by Pastor Don Fado (1998) that led to the Sacramento mass holy union included the following contention:

> My denomination now says to me that I am to minister to anyone and everyone; the world is my parish—but leave out the gays and lesbians. Leave them out. . . . I can come to your home and offer prayers of blessings for the house [or] bless your place of business, regardless of what it is. I can even bless your automobile [or] your animals. But I cannot bless you if you are two people of the same sex who want to make a vow to God of fidelity to each other. There is no other such exclusion in my ministry. It is clearly a case of homophobia and contrary to our tradition.

Similarly, one of the Sacramento 68 pastors (Franks 1999) defended his actions by claiming that to refuse to participate:

> would communicate to the world that [this couple is] not worthy of this institution's blessing for a reason no greater than the fact that the nature of their love does not represent the church's precepts of inclusion. Yet, I believe the church is supposed to be the one place where there is no exclusion. Jeanne and Ellie's holy union has created something beautiful where [the prohibition] has invoked the ugliness of exclusion, staining the good name of the United Methodist Church, and making us miserly in blessing.

Inclusionists also mentioned LGBT exclusion in the context of historical racism and sexism. At the Reconciling Congregation Program rally during General Conference 2000, the program honored the bishop who oversaw the refusal to bring the Sacramento 68 to trial. During his acceptance speech, Bishop Talbert spoke of his experiences as an African-American and said he hoped to never forget what it felt like to be excluded.

Given the particular homosexuality-related prohibitions in the *Book of Discipline* and their apparent basis in the incompatibility language, it may seem obvious that the language at the heart of the inclusionist movement would center on inclusion. The concept of inclusion used by the inclusionists, however, is not a simple concept though it may represent a straightforward goal. As noted in Chapter Three, inclusion has a technical definition having to do with removing the homosexuality-related prohibitions and the incompatibility language from the *Book of Discipline*, leading to specific personal opportunities for LGBT UMs. At the same time, inclusion has a theological component, an emotional component and a political component, and the last of these cannot be ignored. Inclusionists' understanding of their struggle as equivalent to the struggles of women and people of color for full access to all opportunities of church and society plays a role in the strategies they develop to gain full access.

SECOND-CLASS CITIZENSHIP

Of the various themes and images presented in the inclusionist materials, the concept of second-class citizenship is particularly notable. One of the Sacramento 68 pastors, for example, says, "I have not been willing . . . to use my ordination to communicate to gay and lesbian persons that they are a second class citizen in the Church of Jesus Christ."[7] Wulf (1998b: 11) similarly argues that the denominational policies "clearly communicate to lesbian, gay, and bisexual persons that they are not fully welcome. At best, they are counted as second-class citizens whose presence is tolerated rather than celebrated." Reconciling Congregation Program director Mark Bowman claimed that "lesbian and gay persons continue to be second-class members of United Methodist churches . . . They can sit in the pew and give their money, but their loving relationships cannot be recognized" (Jones 1998).[8]

Another common discursive turn is to link second-class citizenship with baptism in order to accentuate the wrongful nature of the "class system" in the United Methodist Church. African-American Pastor Gil Caldwell (1999) asks, "are we doing with Baptized persons who are homosexual, what those white and colored water fountains did to persons who were white or black? Is there a first-class baptism without restrictions and a second-class baptism that condones limits on [ministry]?" Similarly, Meek (2000: 33) argues that, "What makes us Christians . . . irrespective of

our own sexuality or anything else about us is, first of all, our baptism. We're Christians because we've been baptized, and the church has never . . . divided baptized persons into first-[class] and second-class Christians." Inclusionist theologian Dunlap (2000: 79) claims that the denomination has "established a first-class membership and a second-class membership—an action that is theologically, ecclesially, and liturgically intolerable and indefensible." During the General Conference 2000 protest, one delegate is reported to have told those assembled, "We were baptized in this church, raised up in your Sunday schools, confirmed as adults and as we came into adulthood were told that because of who we are, we are no longer welcome, and are second-class citizens of God's kingdom" (Kiely 2000b: 10). Alexander and Preston's (1996) book about the unjust sufferings of LGBT United Methodists is entitled, *We Were Baptized Too*, and part of the book is devoted to the theological outrage that some baptized Christians are being denied the respect and treatment due to all baptized Christians just because of their sexuality.

The use of second-class citizenship language is intriguing in a struggle that is taking place entirely within a religious institution. Such language is probably used most often by social justice advocates in the public sphere to describe racist and sexist laws.[9] When inclusionists use second-class citizenship language, they are thus relying on concepts that are not exclusively Christian to justify their position.

DISCRIMINATION

Just as inclusionists draw their use of second-class citizenship from struggles that have historically been focused on other kinds of inequality, they also use the term "discrimination" extensively. Inclusionists interpret the homosexuality prohibitions and the incompatibility language in the *Discipline* as clear discrimination against LGBT UMs. One pastor (DeLong 2000: 25) expresses her anger "at this church because it legitimizes homophobia and discrimination," while Affirmation (1998a) observes that "the church cannot have it both ways, claiming not to discriminate when it labels our lives 'incompatible with Christian teaching,' refuses to celebrate our relationships and declines to recognize our calls into ministry." Similarly, the Reconciling Congregation Program (1999a) justifies its work, in part, with the argument that it "highlight[s] the blatant discrimination which gay, lesbian and bisexual persons face in our church and society . . . lesbian, gay and bisexual persons are the only social group for whom participation in some aspects of general church life is barred by [UM] church law." A heterosexual pastor suspended for carrying out a holy union claimed in his trial testimony that to refuse such services would be to discriminate against the approximately 30 percent of his congregation that was lesbian or gay, while a defrocked gay deacon said, "I believe that

some day the Methodist Church will realize that it's wrong to discriminate against gay people" (Bull 2000: 25). The term "discrimination," like the phrase "second-class citizenship," is commonly a term of the public sphere; when people tell pollsters that discrimination against lesbians and gay men is wrong, they usually mean discrimination in hiring practices or housing opportunities. As such, the use of this term in a religious context raises again the question of why inclusionists look outside traditionally theological language to make their case.

When they consider discrimination against LGBT UMs, inclusionists are troubled by two particular issues. First, since they view heterosexism as parallel to racism and sexism, and since they see the church making some progress toward ending its racism and sexism, they do not understand why the church is not making progress toward ending its heterosexism. Unsurprisingly, they can only attribute the lack of progress to hypocrisy or bigotry:

> To deny gay and lesbian people equal rights in the church is nothing more than discrimination. We condemn racism, yet allow homophobia; we denounce xenophobia, yet pass laws denying equal rights to gays and lesbians; we deplore sexism, yet tolerate those who denigrate the gay and lesbian lifestyle. To discriminate against homosexuals because they are different from the majority is nothing more than bigotry and must be eliminated from our churches and society.[10]

Inclusionists are also frustrated that the church is actively fostering inequality within its walls, since the church should be the one place where inequality is absolutely unacceptable. Chamberlin (1999) argues that, because religious dogma has contributed massively to the suffering of LGBT people the Church "should be taking steps to correct this teaching. Instead, the [denomination] actually appears to have institutionalized [anti-LGBT] prejudice by giving the prohibition against holy unions the status of church law!" Similarly, Marshall (2000: 163) observes that "heterosexism is perpetuated in the name of the church in ways [that] people would protest if these actions were part of other institutions in our culture." For these inclusionists, United Methodism's failure on this front is disheartening, both because the church has an obligation to rectify injustice to which it has contributed in the past, and because, far from holding itself to higher standards of justice than society, the church is failing even to match societal standards of LGBT inclusion.

INJUSTICE AND JUSTICE

It is not surprising that "[the inclusionist] cause is justice for all" (Beeman 2001: 2). After "inclusion," "second-class citizenship" and "discrimination,"

"justice" and "injustice" were probably the two terms I encountered most frequently. White heterosexual inclusionists in the AMAR hospitality suite often said specifically that they saw LGBT inclusion as a justice issue, sometimes adding, "like the civil rights movement in the 1960s." Several hours after the African bishop talked about how homosexuality was indecent and unbiblical, I heard a delegate tell an AMAR activist that the bishop's sermon was dispiriting to those on the side of justice. The pastor who called for the ecclesiastical disobedience holy union said he was doing so because "I cannot remain silent in face of such an injustice" (Fado 1998), referring to the UMC Judicial Council's decision that the holy union prohibition had the weight of church law.

Unlike the other three terms, justice is a biblical concept, associated popularly with the prophets Micah and Amos,[11] but actually appearing throughout the Bible. Moreover, inclusionists intend the term to maintain its scriptural resonance when they claim (for example) that "the mainline church distorts God's sacramental grace and justice" (Alexander and Preston 1996: xiii). Because the inclusionists rely so much on other political language, however, their use of the word "justice" may sound political rather than scriptural to moderate and conservative United Methodists. This phenomenon is another example of moral alchemy: what the prophet Amos means by justice is valued by many contemporary Christians, while what inclusionists mean by justice is a threat to the church. Like other examples of moral alchemy, this example poses a dilemma for the inclusionists. If they use biblical language, like "justice," it is made to mean something else; if they use strictly political language, like "second-class citizenship," they are acting politically and confirming the conservative symbolization of them as political.

INCLUSIONIST IMAGES OF JESUS

The previous discussion may seem to suggest that the inclusionists use almost exclusively political language in their account of their situation. In fact, the reality is more complicated. Inclusionists do have deep relationships with Jesus or they would have little reason to stay in the United Methodist Church. As Meek (2000: 33) argues, inclusion "has nothing to do with social politics: it is a matter of being faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This isn't politics; it's religion!" Inclusionists thus frequently draw on images of Jesus to buttress their position, but the claims they make tend to interweave religious and political language, and thus can largely be written off by conservatives and evangelicals as serving a political agenda.[12] The comments and writings of LGBT UMs and their allies suggest that they encounter Jesus as himself inclusionist, the representative of an inclusionist God, and as the incarnation of God's special care for the afflicted and oppressed. I discuss these images of Jesus below.

JESUS AND GOD'S ALL-INCLUSIVE LOVE

When inclusionists talk about Jesus or God, the first adjectives they mention have to do with inclusion and the breaking down of boundaries. Given the importance of inclusion language as discussed earlier, this presentation of Jesus is not surprising. Nor is it without grounding in the biblical materials. Jesus is frequently described as socializing and eating with those defined as sinners and as unclean. He also commands his followers to "make disciples of all nations,"[13] and the Apostle Paul remarks famously that "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."[14]

A typical inclusionist reference to Jesus can be found in the mission statement of a congregation that has made a commitment to full inclusion: the church strives to "follow in the reconciling ministry of Jesus as an inclusive, justice-seeking community. We celebrate diversity. In our hearts, that's what being a church is all about."[15] Similarly, a pastor who went on record as expressing willingness to perform holy unions (Waun 1998) argued that:

> Some day the Church will see that the movement toward affirming homosexuals, divisive as that is today, is just like our movement toward the inclusion of African Americans as free people and women as ordained clergy. Breaking down dividing walls is what the Gospel is all about. We are way behind on this issue, and thousands of sexual minorities are leaving the Church because it has not been there for them. It seems that perfect fear is casting out love. It is time to change that and I want to plant my flag on the side of love.

Many of the Sacramento 68 pastors justified their actions in terms of Jesus' inclusiveness. In the below examples, the intermingling of classically political language with images of Jesus is particularly noteworthy:[16]

> I submit that on January 16, 1999, my actions be interpreted not as disobedience but as obedience. First of all, obedience to the Spirit of our Lord Jesus. Please note that by calling Jesus my Lord, I also mean, Caesar/USA is not lord. Jesus opened his table to include, not exclude. There is a spirit that seeks to exclude gay and lesbian Christians from the services of their United Methodist Church pastors and United Methodist Church congregations. The Judicial Council has ruled that this is church law. If so, it is bad law. Obedience to the Spirit of Jesus led me to disobey the bad laws of segregation and Jim Crow.

> For me to say no to Don's invitation on behalf of Ellie and Jeanne would have been to fail to meet them as I believe the Risen Christ meets them, with acts of love and welcome. I see Christ as one who kills the

> fatted calf, and throws a grand party for all who have come home.[17] As baptized Christians, Jeanne and Ellie are a part of a Royal Priesthood. Once they were no people, now they are God's people.[18] I do not take heterosexuality to be the "real sacrament" that brings full participation in the life and blessings of the Church. I stand by Baptism. I saw Ellie and Jeanne in the spirit of Rosa Parks, saying we are Children of God. "Red and yellow, black and white and gay, all are precious in God's sight." They were asking for support and justice from their Church, wrestling with us till daybreak, till we bless them and include them in the chosen people and give them a new name Israel, God's Chosen, BELOVED.[19]

As with the examples of Epworth UMC's mission statement and Pastor Waun's commitment to breaking down dividing walls, these Sacramento 68 statements represent a challenge to the United Methodist Church. Inclusionists believe that if the denomination took the teaching and ministry of Jesus seriously, it would have to conclude that Jesus, the ultimate inclusionist, would support full inclusion of LGBT United Methodists, planting his flag on the side of love rather than the side of fear. Inclusionists ask, "What Would Jesus Do?" and answer, "remove the anti-LGBT language from the *Discipline*."[20] That the language has not been removed from the *Discipline* is proof to the inclusionists that the denomination in general and the conservative caucuses in particular are making decisions based on something other than the clear mandate of Jesus for justice and diversity (as Epworth UMC puts it). After all, Jesus welcomes the prodigal son home and God makes a people from no people. Jacob wrestles with an angel and is blessed with a new name from God. These are biblical stories, not political slogans. No wonder some inclusionists can claim that "this isn't politics, it's religion."

At the same time, these biblical stories are interwoven with language widely understood to be political, such as "diversity." Inclusionists compare LGBT exclusion to racism, and LGBT UMs to Rosa Parks. Civil rights movement language nestles among the biblical language, updated to include, not just "red and yellow, black and white" but also "gay." There is no theoretical reason why such discourses should not be combined. However, the fact of their combination here means that when inclusionists argue correctly that they are proffering religious (and not merely political) justifications, conservatives and evangelicals can also argue correctly that the justifications are not simply religious. Claiming to plant one's flag on the side of love, after all, can also imply that those who don't plant their flags on the side of love are planting them on the side of hatred.

JESUS AND GOD'S GOOD NEWS FOR THE OPPRESSED

The inclusionists do not merely appeal to an all-inclusive Jesus; they specify a Jesus who brings good news for the poor, afflicted and oppressed. Here

too, the inclusionists are on solid biblical ground. Several of the Sacramento 68 pastors refer to the story of Jesus' return as a young man to the synagogue in which he had been brought up, in which he reads the following passage from the prophet Isaiah and claims that it refers to himself: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."[21] Indeed, many biblical stories of Jesus' life focus on his kindness to the poor and disregarded and his promise that they will be first in the Kingdom of Heaven, as well as on his healing of those who have diseases or conditions that make them "unclean." Thus, a pastor (Kemling 1998) who signed the statement indicating his willingness to perform holy unions could draw on both Jesus' work and the story of the exodus of the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery:

> Having listened to these stories, and serving a God who sees the affliction of the oppressed, who hears their cry, who knows their sorrows, and who comes down to deliver them,[22] I have no other option, but to take the stand which I have taken. To do otherwise would be to deny the God revealed to me in Jesus Christ by the witness of the scriptures.

The Methodist Federation for Social Action's (2000c) strategy sheet on "heterosexism" similarly couches its appeal to inclusion (below) in the fact that "God calls us to reach out to the marginalized:"

> The primary issue is whether or not the United Methodist Church expresses a willingness to extend justice to those who have been excluded. God calls us to reach out to the marginalized. We have made strong attempts to do this in relationship to persons of color and women, but we remain reluctant as a denomination to do so for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons.

Such claims rely on the belief that LGBT UMs are in fact oppressed and marginalized, a belief articulated clearly by Sacramento 68 pastors:[23]

> Jesus' practice of having table fellowship with despised, outcasts and sinners was what constituted the big . . . scandal. [To] those disreputable types that good religious people felt were beyond the pale of God's grace and salvation, Jesus came along and proclaimed in word and deed "God loves you." [To] those unrighteous, according to the law, Jesus said, "God loves you." God loves you, poor, lepers, AIDS victims, IRS agents, shepherds, prostitutes. God loves you. God loves you, woman taken in adultery. God loves you, lost sheep, that is, those of you who are outside the church. God loves you, gay, lesbian, bisexual

> people. God loves you . . . Jesus' table fellowship with rejected outcasts and sinners . . . was a parable of God's unconditional love and acceptance, and it was enough to anger Jesus' opponents that he excluded no one from these festive meals.
>
> I have been convicted by Jesus' boundary-crossing love, and by the assurance that God is particularly present in the world on the part of the pained. The pain of committed gay and lesbian Christians at the hands not only of a society, but [also] of a church, that demeans, devalues, and even attacks them, cries out for a response of Christ-like love. This response I know to be one of acceptance and of affirmation.

In using biblical passages about Jesus' good news for the poor to make a case for UMC LGBT inclusion, inclusionists may perceive that they have found scriptural support for their position that does not devolve immediately into politics. After all, part of the point of these passages is that God's love is not limited by the politics of the day; God is more concerned with human well-being than political categories. Here too, however, symbolization of inclusionists in general and LGBT people in particular as political may limit the value of this inclusionist strategy. The claim that LGBT UMs are today's poor, afflicted and oppressed is not likely to sway those United Methodists who firmly believe homosexuality to be a sinful, selfish rebellion against God's plan. Moreover, the inclusionist claim that LGBT UMs are marginalized, oppressed and afflicted implies that the denomination as a whole should understand itself as marginalizing, oppressing and afflicting LGBT United Methodists. It is the rare individual or institution that is willing to consider the possibility that he, she or it is acting oppressively. These two points, taken together, suggest the difficulty that inclusionists will have succeeding with this biblical appeal.

CLOSURE THEORY

The inclusionists might have developed an extensive analysis of homophobia, heterosexism, antigay prejudice and discrimination without making the claim that the conservatives and evangelicals were trying to completely disempower them or push them out of the denomination. In fact, some inclusionists did make this claim, though the claim coexisted uneasily with the inclusionist culture wars analysis that the conservatives simply read the Bible differently and thus could be people of good intentions while still hurting LGBT UMs terribly. Of course, in their most pained moments, such as the afternoon following the final voting at General Conference 2000, many inclusionists appeared to feel that, as one man put it, "they really don't want us here." Taken as a whole, however, inclusionists appeared to be caught between their desire to treat the conservatives with good faith

while disagreeing with them profoundly, on the one hand, and their intuition that the conservatives were seeking power at their expense, on the other. This latter intuition can be understood as a form of conflict analysis, different from simple descriptive claims about homophobia and heterosexism because it focuses directly on power per se rather than stopping with prejudice and discrimination.

While social scientists have approached the question of how to characterize power and authority (socially legitimated power) in a number of ways, sociologist Max Weber's concept of "social closure" is most relevant to the UMC inclusion struggle. As noted in Chapter One, social closure describes a process in which one group monopolizes advantages by closing off rewards and opportunities to another group defined as outsiders. Weber only hinted at what such a process might look like (e.g., 1968: 341–343), but others have elaborated on the concept.[24]

Weber's initial mention of social closure and most of the elaborations on it have focused on class inequality, but Weber's elaborators agree that the process is applicable to status groups (women, people of color) as well as classes. Parkin (1979: 44), for example, notes that closure "entails the singling out of certain social or physical attributes as the justificatory basis of exclusion" and claims that almost any "group attribute" is fair game, while Manza (1992: 288) uses sexism as an example to make the point that "different systems of closure have different logics." Discussing status-based closure, Parkin (1979: 68–69) argues that "subordination is experienced through a myriad of direct personal degradations and affronts to human dignity, encouraged by the submersion of the individual into the stereotype of his [or her] 'membership' group." These observations suggest that it may be possible to deepen our understanding of the UMC LGBT situation by first applying a closure analysis to their case, then determining both what evidence would support such an analysis and whether inclusionists themselves might agree with it.[25]

Disco (1987: 63) provides a helpful list of three critical parameters that should be considered in any social closure study: the "scope and content of the 'social field' in question," the "criteria on the basis of which 'insiders' are distinguished from 'outsiders;'" and the "nature of the privileges and resources that are 'enclosed.'" Arguably, the social field in question is the United Methodist Church and the relevant criteria for outsider status would be LGBT sexual/gender identity and/or support for the complete inclusion of LGBT people in the life of the church. I identify six monopolized privileges and resources: 1) general treatment as a welcomed and valued member of the church; normalcy; 2) the social and religious valuation of one's sexuality as a normal, natural and appropriate part of one's personhood; freedom from sexuality-based master status; 3) knowledge and comfort that one's sexuality is specifically "compatible with Christian teaching;" 4) denominational funding for one's organizations and concerns; 5) legitimate marriage to one's beloved by a UMC pastor, meaning that one is married

in the eyes of the church with all the particular rights, benefits and valuations that involves; and 6) the opportunity to serve as an ordained UMC pastor, work to which one feels specially called, and for which career one may have been trained.

EVIDENCE OF SOCIAL CLOSURE

My findings suggest some support for a closure approach, particularly in terms of the way boundaries seem to work in the struggle. Boundaries play a crucial role whenever a group in power seeks to keep another group out of power, as boundaries serve both to define the parameters of power and powerlessness and to mark off the "protected space" of the powerful. The UMC inclusion struggle is, in part, a struggle over the placement of boundaries. The conservatives were working to "hold the line" in their own words, and also to erect new boundaries; for example, they sought to overturn the civil rights language in the *Discipline* so that everyone would be perfectly clear that the church does not in any way support same-sex civil marriage and related rights. More generally, virtually all of the homosexuality-related actions of the Coalition for United Methodist Accountability (CUMA) and the organizations that made it up involved "boundary policing" with a determined focus on punishing "pro-homosexual disobedience."[26] The stigmatization of homosexuality at General Conference 2000 represents symbolic "boundary work."[27]

One hallmark of successful closure is that those intended to be closed out are not represented among the relevant decision-makers. The lack of LGBT delegates (and the inability of LGBT pastors to come out as such without being defrocked) meant that, as "Jason" said in committee and during the plenary session, heterosexuals were making decisions for LGBT people. Jason compared the situation to men making decisions about and for women, and whites making decisions about and for blacks. Also during General Conference 2000, the Parents' Reconciling Network handed out a flyer that observed, "In the 29 years of debate over LGBTs in the United Methodist Church, *only two* openly gay people have been heard from the stage of General Conference."[28]

The conservative caucuses also had certain priorities and acted in certain ways that could be interpreted as supporting a closure analysis, though other interpretations are possible. For example, they completely and utterly refused to compromise, even when inclusionists were willing to do so, even in the face of visible anguish on the part of inclusionists, and even with regard to the "faithful Christians disagree" language, which unarguably represented the technical truth of the situation. Indeed, the conservatives prided themselves on "holding the line." This suggested that the conservative caucuses were seeking to extend and shore up their power in a way that did not allow for compromise (which would have "weakened" them).

Moreover, the UM Decision 2000 goal of making it possible for UMC congregations in disagreement with official policy to more easily leave the denomination arguably represented an attempt on the part of conservatives to set into action a dynamic whereby inclusionists would leave and the church would become largely or entirely moderate to conservative. Such a dynamic would ultimately result in "closing out" the inclusionists.[29]

While UM Decision 2000 may have genuinely believed that there would be either a schism or a mass exodus of conservatives if any of the homosexuality prohibitions were overturned, they chose to address this concern in a way that could be interpreted as menacing or threatening. They sent a video[30] to every delegate before General Conference 2000 warning that full acceptance of homosexuals would essentially destroy the denomination. The video claimed that the UMC was a "house divided," and the cover of the video asked viewers, "Can we continue to walk together in one denomination?" Delegates were warned that, "You will be voting upon the future of the UMC." Similarly, during the first UMC Decision 2000 briefing at General Conference, leaders implied that "scriptural Christianity" could only flourish where it was in the majority, in control, or the sole form of Wesleyanism in a given region. At no time did the inclusionists say anything about wanting the evangelicals to leave the denomination, and in fact they sought compromise on the incompatibility language rather than a simple removal of the language from the *Discipline*. Only the conservatives ever talked about a potential schism in the denomination; only the conservatives ever seemed to want their opponents to leave the church.[31]

Without wishing to cast doubt on the evangelicals' belief in and respect for the Bible and the *Book of Discipline*, it seems clear that evangelicals as well as inclusionists pick and choose what scriptural and *Book of Discipline* texts they need for their purposes. Evangelicals rejected inclusionists' use of various biblical passages suggesting that God might do a new thing and open up the Kingdom of Heaven to new, unexpected types of people;[32] evangelicals also rejected the inclusionist use of Jesus' admonition, "do not judge so that you may not be judged" [33] as well as his claim that prophets will be known by their fruits.[34] Dunlap (2000: 72) argues that United Methodists should not be reading the Bible literally on homosexuality in any case, given the *Discipline's* statement that one should draw on "historical, literary and textual studies of recent years" when studying Scripture.[35] Such use of the Bible on the part of evangelicals made no sense to me unless something other than legitimate religious beliefs were at stake, and one likely explanation seemed to be a closure-style power struggle.

Finally, both in published materials and interviews, several leaders and members of conservative caucuses buttressed their positions on homosexuality by citing research by Paul Cameron and others who do their research from an explicitly antigay perspective.[36] Cameron's "Family Research Institute," which Cameron describes as "scientists defending traditional family values," has manufactured homosexuality-related statistics for years. The FRI has

focused on the relationship between homosexuality and mental and physical illness, with a particular intent to prove that gay men are wildly promiscuous child molesters and murderers, and that lesbians intentionally spread STDs.[37] In 1983, Cameron reported that he was directing a national survey that would "help provide ammunition for those who want laws adopted banning homosexual acts throughout the United States." Cameron was expelled from the American Psychological Association on ethical charges in 1983, criticized by the Nebraska Psychological Association in 1984, and censured by the American Sociological Association in 1986 for misinterpreting and misrepresenting sociological research on homosexuality in order to make his political points. I could not imagine any reason why the conservative caucuses, with a stated commitment to truth, would make use of such "research" unless they were willing to use virtually any resources that would shore up their power, including ethically questionable resources.

INCLUSIONIST SUPPORT FOR SOCIAL CLOSURE THEORY

While I did not meet any inclusionists who used the phrase "social closure," a number of inclusionists believed that such a process was at work among the conservatives. For example, two Sacramento 68 pastors tied the work of UM conservatives to larger political power struggles and wrote directly about the inclusion conflict as a denominational power struggle:[38]

> I am concerned that the United Methodist Church is being influenced by wider political forces at work in the nation which see oppression of gays and lesbians as a stepping stone to political power. As a student of the activities of the Religious Right in the political arena, I am deeply offended by the exploitation of anti-gay/lesbian prejudice for political power gain, and I believe that the authentic Christian response is to bring to light this cynical abuse of power.
>
> I am concerned that the attention being given the [prohibition against holy unions] masks an attempt to divide our fellowship. I see resources being spent on this issue as part of a conservative political agenda. I see it surrounding an ungraceful struggle for power within our church [as] part of a movement which has scorned and attacked the covenantal structures of our church [by setting] up replacement structures [that] drain resources from otherwise faithful United Methodists.

During General Conference 2000, a number of inclusionists used language and made claims suggestive of a social closure analysis. One inclusionist said he thought that the struggle was a matter of who got to speak for the church, and of which side would define the language that was okay to use; he added that Good News inserted "a discourse of schism" but put it into

the mouths of moderate UMs. Another inclusionist said he thought homosexuality was not a real issue in the church but a wedge issue being used by the conservatives in the same way that Pat Robertson used "the gay agenda" in his fundraising letters; this individual also provided examples of how the evangelicals selected Scripture for their own purposes.[39] Yet another inclusionist said that the Good News leadership wasn't interested in discernment or God's will, only in making sure its own will got enacted.[40]

More recently, a member of the Sacramento 68 observed in a personal communication that:

> Since the 1970s millions of outside dollars have been funneled into various newly formed groups such as Good News, for the sole purpose of undermining the stability and social justice emphasis of the Church. The impact of such large sums of monies, without a corresponding outcry about being invaded [on the part of] our Methodist leadership, has successfully seduced the "middle" into believing that what is has always been so for the institution.

While some conservatives might agree with the analysis presented thus far in this chapter, such agreement is not necessary in order for the analysis to play a compelling role in inclusionist decision-making. Regardless of conservative and evangelical intentions, the inclusionists drew on both the more general inequality analysis presented at the beginning of the chapter and, to a lesser extent, a social closure analysis, to determine what they would do once the voting was over. The remainder of this chapter considers the inclusionist solution of activism.

"IRRITATE AWAY:" THE ACTIVIST SOLUTION

> By political resistance we mean overt and active acts [at all levels, including:] Legislative proposals and lobbying efforts [and] ecclesial disobedience . . . Such efforts must continue. Presently it does not appear that the vote of General Conference will change in the near future, and such efforts to keep the issue before the Church and to make progress toward an official change require these kinds of efforts.[41]

How one solves a problem depends on what one takes to be the correct analysis of it. For the inclusionists, it must have seemed patently clear that the correct analysis of their situation was political, and thus that the correct response to their situation must also be political. For example, the Sacramento 68's political response to the Judicial Council prohibition of holy unions was to carry out a holy union in ecclesiastical disobedience. In the 1998 sermon that eventually led to the ceremony, Don Fado said,

> I cannot remain silent in face of such an injustice . . . I can leave the United Methodist ministry, or I can protest. I choose the latter, and the way I will protest is that I will do such a service, as an act of civil disobedience—well, that's the wrong word because this is not "civil," this is not against any of our state laws—I will conduct a service of holy union, as an act of ecclesiastical disobedience. I will not do it in secret. I will do it in the spirit in which Martin Luther King, Jr. did his disobedience. I will do it openly in order to challenge the law.

Fado's announcement was political on a number of fronts. He called the holy union prohibition an "injustice." He called the holy union an act of "protest" and used the term "ecclesiastical disobedience" to describe it. He said he would carry out the holy union "in the spirit in which Martin Luther King, Jr. did his disobedience" in order to "challenge the law." Holy unions often have either an explicit or an implicit political sensibility to them; after all, as those of us who have had holy unions know, our inability to marry legally hovers in the air around us even as we speak our vows and exchange our rings. In Fado's case, however, the bride and bride were not part of the picture until after the sermon had been given. This particular holy union was intentionally political.[42]

At General Conference 2000, the political response of the inclusionists involved various kinds of witnessing and protesting, culminating with shutting down the assembly temporarily. One particular exchange with a volunteer in the AMAR hospitality suite brought home the inclusionist solution very clearly:

> She tells me that we're like the widow who kept bugging the unjust judge in the Gospels, who finally got justice because she wore down her opponent.[43] I ask her about the possible damage done by the irritation factor and she says she has heard a lot about that, but she is irritated by the conservatives and finds this a graceful form of demonstration. Irritate away, she says. If we don't continue to be out there, we'll be forgotten. If this were an issue of race, no one would be questioning the irritation factor. The kind and graceful tactics we're using would not even be questioned, she argues, and goes on to make a "sitting in the back of the bus" analogy. We have no access, she says. There's only the remotest chance of an openly gay person becoming a delegate. So what do we do, be quiet or be irritating? The irritation factor has been set up by the church itself, she says, since it hasn't set up a way for our voices to be heard. (Field notes, May 4)

This analysis of the General Conference 2000 situation matched what I heard from others, although no one else articulated the combination of righteous indignation, fear and defensiveness as well as this woman. About an hour after the conversation, another inclusionist told me that AMAR

had a thousand rainbow crosses and that they were handing them out to whomever would wear one since they really wanted a presence at General Conference. By the third day, inclusionists had their presence; from then on there were always AMAR members and (later) delegates visible in clergy stoles, pins, buttons and other pro-inclusion markers.[44]

The civil disobedience on the ninth and tenth days of General Conference 2000 represented an important component of the inclusionist witness.[45] Rodney Powell, a 1960s nonviolent student movement leader who supported Soulforce's presence at General Conference 2000, argued that "we African-Americans had to take our truth to the streets before anyone would listen. It's time homosexual-Americans[46] took their truth to the streets as well."[47] Shortly after General Conference 2000, Rutt (2000) wrote of her exhilaration at the protests: "No longer would we sit silently by and watch the church send messages of antipathy and apathy as our brothers and sisters are defrocked, dehumanized, and devalued by the church."

If the problem is political, the solution should be political as well: "homosexual-Americans" should take their truth to the streets, shut down General Conference, and refuse to sit silently by while the church degrades them and closes them out from power. This is indeed a tempting solution, appealing to me as well as to the inclusionists. When the delegates voted to "hold the line" on the incompatibility clause my heart was broken too; when the protesters marched in I was exhilarated and filled with their righteous indignation. A part of me wanted to "irritate away" along with them.

And yet: the solution may not be so simple. Not every United Methodist agrees that the problem is political, and even some United Methodists who do agree may not agree that the solution should therefore be political. The connection between the inclusionists' actions and others' responses to them ultimately cannot be understood using only a political or social closure analysis, any more than it can be understood using only a culture wars analysis or only an analysis of homophobia and heterosexism in the church.

One important step remains to be taken. A culture wars approach may begin to make sense of the conservative and Evangelical perspective, but it does not help us understand the moderates. An analysis of sexuality-based inequality in the church takes us a long way toward comprehending the inclusionist perspective, especially once it is coupled with the political analyses provided in this chapter, but it still does not address the moderate perspective. Bringing the "Methodist middle" into the picture requires the use of an institutional analysis; as it turns out, such an analysis is also necessary to explain fully the perspective of the conservatives and evangelicals as well as the untenable position of the inclusionists. I take up this task in Chapter Eight.

8 Analytic Perspectives
Contradictory Institutional Logics

At this stage of analyzing the UMC inclusion struggle, the position of the inclusionists seems to be fairly clear. They are profoundly unhappy with the state of LGBT affairs in the church, focused on the inclusion conflict and aching for change. They don't understand why the world is becoming more inclusive while the church is not; recall, for example, Marshall's (2000: 163) observation that "[h]eterosexism is perpetuated in the name of the church in ways [that] people would protest if these actions were part of other institutions in our culture." Similarly, an inclusionist at General Conference 1996 is reported to have asked, "[h]ow can the church keep voting this way when the rest of the world is changing so quickly?"[1]

Conservatives, evangelicals, and moderates, in contrast, act as though it is entirely appropriate that the church is not following the lead of "the rest of the world." This observation leads to the possibility that, in order to understand UM opposition to LGBT inclusion, we need to determine how those opposed to inclusion think of the United Methodist Church as an institution.

As it turns out, conservative, evangelical and moderate UMs have a great deal to say about the UMC as an organization and as a religious institution; their comments can help us understand why, as Dell (2000: 5) put it, the "church constituency [is] more inclined to express its 'moderate' leanings in conservative directions than in progressive directions." Five notable themes emerge from evangelical, conservative and moderate reflections on the church. First, United Methodism has a distinctive identity. Second, United Methodism's Christian distinctiveness specifically makes it different from modern individualism, sociology, and political liberalism. Third, United Methodism has standards to which it can reasonably expect to hold church members and pastors. Fourth, United Methodism as an institution elicits strong loyalty and support from its members. Fifth, the church merits protection from both the invasion of "the world" and the problematic values and actions of inclusionists. I discuss each of these themes in turn.

APPEALING TO (AND DEFENDING) UNITED METHODISM'S DISTINCTIVE IDENTITY

A moderate delegate told me that "there is a sense among substantial numbers of Methodists that what is at stake in this particular debate is nothing less than the very soul of the church itself, that this issue cuts way down to the very essence of what it means to be a Christian, a Methodist and so on," and a conservative delegate reflected that "people have such strong feelings about this issue on both sides because it's way more than an opinion. It goes to the core of who we are and what we believe." Statements such as these, which I encountered frequently, suggest that how conservatives and moderates understand United Methodism may be just as important as how they understand homosexuality.

How do those opposed to full LGBT inclusion understand United Methodism? When a denominational attorney says that inclusionist protesters "violate what it means to be a faith community,"[2] what does he mean? One member of the Confessing Movement describes "what makes us United Methodist" as "the primacy of Scripture, the absolute truth of the Gospel."[3] Similarly, the denominational attorney himself argues that UM clergy have "promised to uphold your beliefs, and if you can't expect that of them, then you have really lost what makes you distinct . . . it is your beliefs that identify you as different from and distinct from any other denomination."[4] During an interview, a moderate pastor discussed the Great Commission (Jesus' command to make disciples of all the nations) in light of Wesley's goal of "spread[ing] scriptural holiness over the land,"[5] arguing that "if United Methodism gave up the Great Commission, it would become something other than the United Methodist Church. It would become something other that what John Wesley had founded." For these conservatives and moderates, United Methodism is defined at least in part by a particular approach to the Bible and an adherence to a specific set of beliefs and commitments.

I asked a conservative caucus leader why that caucus opposed changing the incompatibility clause to language stating that faithful Christians disagreed about homosexuality. His caucus had been involved in producing the UM Decision 2000 video which claimed that the United Methodist Church was "a house divided,"[6] so it seemed that he would have supported the language change as a simple description of reality. His answer was thought-provoking:

> One could make that statement [that faithful Christians disagree on the issue] as an assessment of a fact that exists in the church. When it comes to the point of stating [your Christian position] in your *Book of Discipline*, to say 'our position is that there are different understandings of our position,' that's really a non-position. A church needs to take a position and say, this is what we affirm. This is what

> we believe. . . . That certainly is true, there are those who disagree, but you don't want to put that in your church's statement of faith because the actual impact would probably be . . . to neuter the impact of having a statement at all about sexuality.

Beyond his intriguing use of the gendered term "neuter," this leader's response suggests that the church's identity relies on unified statements of belief (on this issue, for example) that are ratified by the denomination as an institution. Another conservative UM similarly argued that "to remove the language from the *Discipline* is way more than taking a neutral position on this issue. It would certainly be viewed as [if] you had just as well put a statement in the *Discipline* that this is all okay."

Thus, it is not surprising that some evangelicals worry about whether the United Methodist identity is holding together in the face of the kind of pluralism that could allow the denomination to accept homosexual practice, as with one conservative leader's concern that "we've gotten so diverse as to bring into question the basic doctrines of the church. If we're going to stay together and work in ministry, we need to come up with a common set of beliefs we can all agree on" (Gillmor 1999).

Moderates particularly expressed frustration that inclusionists were not willing to honor the distinctive identity of the United Methodist Church by either agreeing with the current stance of the *Discipline* or leaving the denomination. One delegate argued that "if you want to be a United Methodist pastor, you play by our rules, and if you don't want to do it, that's fine. You can be a pastor; you just can't call yourself a United Methodist pastor. John Wesley kicked people out. . . . The church says, fine, go start your own denomination, but you can't play ball in our court." Similarly, a UM pastor observed that:

> John Wesley was very, very firm about the Methodist societies and the dynamics of those societies and how people were to order their lives within [them]. And John Wesley would say, "These are our ways. But if you don't want to live by our ways, may God bless you. We wish you well. But go find a different way. This is our way." And so the thing that just kind of gives me tension [about the inclusionists] is why the continual push? Why not just say, okay, well, we'll just go, and with our understandings of the truth source and we will go and we will live in this way that we believe is the most appropriate?

CONTRASTING THE CHURCH WITH "THE WORLD"

Conservative and moderate United Methodists and other Christians also claim that, given the distinctiveness of Christian and denominational identities, the church should not make decisions based on non-Christian values

and priorities. At times, such claims could be quite general, as when an evangelical UM told a researcher that UMs were "a people of faith, and there has to be some bedrock of our faith that can't be proved with a rational argument."[7] More often, though, the non-Christian values and priorities in question involve "justice and civil rights, contemporary lifestyles, individual opinions, medical science, or philosophical ethics."[8] Three types of non-Christian values and priorities are mentioned most often: modern individualism, sociology, and political liberalism.

A conservative ELCA theologian explains why inclusionist arguments are not appropriate in a Christian setting as follows:

> The assumptions underlying [inclusionist arguments] almost always involve a modern liberal understanding of persons as *autonomous individuals* who can decide for themselves when it comes to all matters of morality. This is quite different from the Biblical view that persons are God's creatures, created to live in accord with God's will, and that the desire to be autonomous . . . is at the heart of what sin is all about. The key category for the autonomous individual is 'rights' rather than duties or responsibilities.[9]

For this theologian, as for conservative and evangelical UMs, the inclusionist argument falls short because it has a modern individualist understanding of humanity, rather than the biblical understanding that properly informs Christianity. Similarly, an Anglican evangelical wonders about the extent to which a gay Christian message could "criticize the prevailing culture" as opposed to the extent to which it would "actually endorse the deepest orientations of liberal culture and erode the distinctiveness of the Church" (Bradshaw 2003: 217), thus explicitly contrasting "liberal culture" with "the distinctiveness of the Church." A conservative United Methodist document claims that the homosexuality debate "has been shaped by the language of sociology and the agenda of popular culture"[10] while a General Conference 2000 delegate contrasted "the mind of the church" with merely "sociological" interpretations of the Bible. Sociology and modern individualism are thus of a piece in differing dramatically from Christianity; they also inform the political liberalism rejected by UMs opposed to full LGBT inclusion.

Evangelical and conservative United Methodists in particular pick up instantly and sensitively on what they see as the most problematic element of the call for inclusion, namely the way in which inclusionists appear to miss the "churchly" nature of United Methodism in their focus on "political" matters such as equality and discrimination. A former homosexual argues that "I could understand complete acceptance if we were a civil group or secular organization, but we are not. *We are the church of Jesus Christ*. Our mandates come not from finite human invention, but from the Infinite One. We are not a democracy but a Theocracy."[11] An inclusionist told me that for the evangelicals, "the church doesn't have to be an equal-opportunity

employer." Evangelicals and conservatives are wearied by what they see as political claims on the part of inclusionists because, from the evangelical perspective, the claims represent a misunderstanding (willful or unintentional) of the very nature of the church. One conservative delegate, for example, told me he thought "people are confusing the constitution and the Bill of Rights with holiness. It's as though there's not a right or a wrong, but only a matter of discrimination. I get a feeling that we're confusing civil rights issues with theological issues." A conservative caucus leader made a similar argument:

> Justice issues deal normally with human rights, and it has never, never been considered a basic human right for persons to practice homosexuality . . . or for the church to have to affirm homosexual practice. . . . For the church, it's not a rights or a justice issue, it's a moral issue. [The] church has a right and the responsibility to speak and declare what its own standards are on that issue.[12]

Even some moderates who are most sympathetic to the pain of LGBT UMs and who believe strongly in the church's civil rights commitment more generally do not find homosexuality to be a fully parallel case:

> [The problem with the civil rights analogy is that] in some ways the church has dealt with the civil rights part of it. Where the church is at this point is [that] we're saying that you indeed have rights as a child of God no matter what your sexual identity is. Where we are in disagreement is [about the appropriateness of the fact] that the church has not bestowed *rites*. (A moderate delegate; emphasis in original)

> Another thing that's coming into play is the couching of the issue in civil rights terms, and I think that is an issue that is near and dear to the heart of most United Methodists. We do believe in civil rights, human rights [but] it's hard for me to see the issue of homosexuality as a civil rights issue in the same context of, say, slavery. (A moderate delegate)

The distinction between "rights" and "rites" was elegantly delineated in an evangelical essay on "status, purity and the church's discussion of homosexuality."[13] Theologian Stephen Mott argued that the distinction between inclusiveness and sexual purity appeared in Jesus' own life and that Jesus could "challenge the distinctions of social status" while still having "his own differing purity system," claiming further that:

> Jesus' social inclusiveness is combined with a high moral standard, which included the strictest standards for sexual conduct. . . . Jesus would continue to cross the false boundaries of status of our day and certainly would be found with gays and lesbians [who are] scorned,

> feared, excluded, denied basic rights of inclusion in community, and even treated violently . . . At the same time Jesus had his own boundaries of purity based on internal religious and ethical commitment.

Such an interpretation of Jesus' life and values led Mott in 2000 to publicly support the current stance of the *Discipline*, "both from the perspective of the social witness that position makes and the support of what I regard as the Biblical, classical boundaries on this issue." Noting that his sister was a lesbian, Mott said that "[both sides should] work together on being more forceful in implementing what we say in defending the rights of gay and lesbian people" in the public sphere.

LEGITIMATE STANDARDS OF THE CHURCH

In explaining their perspective, conservative and moderate UMs and other Protestants drew various analogies, the most common of which pointed to the legitimacy of the church's standards. For example, one delegate said she thought "the church has a right to require certain standards for ordination and also certain guidelines for what constitutes marriage. It's just like if a person wants to be an airline pilot . . . but if that person does not have 20–20 vision without glasses there's absolutely no way that he or she can qualify as an airline pilot." Similarly, one conservative's book on inclusionists (and other problematic UMs) was entitled *Theological Malpractice?* and suggested that there was a body of knowledge and a set of actions that constituted appropriate "theological practice."[14] These conservatives thus compared United Methodism to professions requiring an extensive amount of training, and in which the risk of harm was great if the practitioner did not meet the standard.

Conservative and evangelical UMs discussing sexuality have also compared the ordination prohibition to driving the speed limit, as with Kirkley's (1984: 187) argument that:

> The state does not raise the speed limit to accommodate speeders; rather, it expects all drivers to conform to the established requirements. Likewise the church should not adjust its requirements to accommodate those whose sexual orientation is not consistent with the church's expectation regarding the "highest ideals of the Christian life."[15]

Beyond analogies from the professions and the law, some evangelical Christians have made intriguing use of linguistic analogies in arguing for appropriate limits on sexual behavior. An Episcopalian referred to the "vocabulary of faith" in his claim to LGBT Episcopalians that "you are formed and framed in the right use and handling of that vocabulary [of faith]. You are part of a particular story, which gives a way of understanding

the right relationship between things. What we've done is to mix up the stories by trying to bring categories from other traditions to bear."[16] Similarly, Winner (2005: 123) asserts that "[i]n baptism, you have become Christ's body, and it is Christ's body that must give you permission to join His Body to another body. In the Christian grammar, we have no *right* to sex."[17] Finally, Moore (1996) extensively uses the analogy of musical styles as ordered sound systems identified with specific communities in claiming that the UM community is ordered so as not to include homosexuality.

The use of analogies from the professions, the law, language and music clarifies further the sense in which conservatives and evangelicals think of United Methodism and Christianity as ordered religious systems with internal logics, held together through common agreement to adhere to those logics. At the same time, such analogies take as a given exactly what inclusionists question. It is clear, for example, why doctors must avoid malpractice and pilots must see well. It is not automatically clear to inclusionists why pastors must be heterosexual or celibate.

Similarly, conservatives and evangelicals imply that individuals, in becoming members of society, have consented to follow society's laws, speak its shared language and tell its agreed-upon stories; similarly, by becoming members of the United Methodist Church inclusionists have promised their assent to institutional laws and common practices. The analogy with music points to both the church as a community and its moral expectations as the sounds that must be created within certain harmonic frameworks if the community is to hold together. While inclusionists would undoubtedly reject these analogies with homosexuality, the analogies provide valuable insight into the conservative mindset regarding the institutionalized nature of United Methodism and Christianity.

LOYAL TO *DISCIPLINE* AND DENOMINATION

Weston's (1999) study of the homosexuality struggle in the PCUSA uncovered what Weston termed the "loyalist center," the large percentage of Presbyterians who were "loyal to the church *as it is*."[18] Several moderates spoke more or less directly about their loyalty, as with one delegate's observation that "a lot of us in the middle . . . do trust the *Discipline* [and] do trust the process. . . . Maybe people in the middle are voting the way they're voting because of their loyalty to the *Discipline*."

This moderate trust in "the process" contrasts sharply with an inclusionist's comment following the General Conference 2000 votes that "we can no longer trust the process. This is not about process. This is about people."[19] While this contrast may bring to mind the inclusionist culture wars-type claim that they focus on real people while the conservatives focus on "issues," I would argue that a different phenomenon is in play here. This moderate delegate, for example, was particularly sensitive to LGBT pain

in our conversation, and mindful of the lives of "real" LGBT people. His loyalty to, and trust in, the *Discipline* and the process of change coexisted along with his ability to talk supportively about assuring LGBT rights in society. He simply encountered the two matters as different issues calling for different responses.

PROTECTING THE INSTITUTION

Because conservatives and moderates view the United Methodist Church as an institution distinct from "the world" and unique in its own identity, with its own standards and meriting loyalty from its members, they are also concerned with protecting the institution from any possible threats. Two kinds of threats emerge most frequently: the threat that "the world" will permeate the church until the church has lost its distinctiveness and the threat that the denomination as an organization will be polarized or weakened by the sexuality struggle.

It occurred to me frequently during my fieldwork that the conservatives were treating the homosexuality prohibitions as though they were dams holding back the floodwaters of heresy and apostasy. Conservatives seemed to fear that if they allowed the dams to be weakened, even by merely agreeing to disagree on homosexuality, the church would be awash in worldliness and would no longer recognizably be the church. To the extent that the church is only understood to be "the church" if it is indeed distinct from "the world," this perspective makes sense. Part of the challenge for conservatives and moderates is that "the world" does not merely exist outside the church in a way that allows for easy safeguarding of the church's distinctiveness. Rather, from the conservative and moderate perspective "the world" can readily slip into the church, undermining its integrity. As one conservative caucus member pointed out, the inclusionists served as the bearers of "the world" and its threats:

> [Activists] go to the Christian arena and then say "[acceptance of homosexuality is] being done here, it's a Christian issue not just a political issue, you've got to do the same thing." And that's where, for many, many evangelical conservative Christians, that's where the rubber meets the road and they're saying, "No, society can say whatever it wants to say . . . but that doesn't mean that the church has to bow down to that and accept it just because society says it's right."

Similarly, a conservative delegate arguing against replacing the incompatibility language with "faithful Christians disagree about homosexuality" language said that the statement was already a compromise. He felt that if the church agreed to disagree, a domino effect would begin, a statement I interpreted as meaning that the church might then agree to disagree on any

number of issues, at which point United Methodism would be in danger of losing its identity.

Moderates, some of whom were personally liberal on homosexuality, raised concerns that the struggle was damaging the church and made it clear that their primary commitment was to the church as an organization. During committee debate, one delegate said that he had championed inclusion but saw the need for a range of voices in the church. Discussing the trial of a pastor who had carried out holy unions, the delegate added that the denomination could not have any more such trials pulling it apart; the trials polarized the church, creating winners and losers. The delegate expressed sadness at the potential loss of both conservatives and gay pastors. Similarly, Comstock (1996: 213–214) reports the recollection of an inclusionist about an incident at General Conference 1992, when a delegate had come to this inclusionist "and said that he had come a long way on lesbian/gay issues, but that he was real angry about the demonstration that was going on by Affirmation. 'So, I'm not sure that I'm going to vote for you. I've come a long way, but I think this is inappropriate.'" The inclusionist recalled his response: "We as a church need to acknowledge our addiction to power and prestige. We need to acknowledge that people have been dropped and lost . . . and that we haven't accepted the harm that we've really done." In this case, the man who had "come a long way on lesbian/gay issues" felt that the demonstration was so disrespectful to the denomination at its most important organizational meeting that he at least contemplated changing his vote to oppose the inclusionists; in contrast, the inclusionist in the narrative remained focused on inequality and LGBT pain without apparently acknowledging the delegate's concern about respecting the organization. A final comment from a moderate delegate to General Conference 2000 is instructive:

> My role as a . . . delegate is to do what is in the church's best interest . . . to preserve, protect and defend the United Methodist Church. And I do not think that it is in the best interests of the United Methodist Church right now to take the language that's in the [*Discipline*] out of it. Now I wish to God the language were never put in there. . . . I know the church back home [and] I know what the church is like in other places . . . where the Methodist Church is at its strongest, and I do not think I'm being a good steward of the church if I take, for example, the path that [the liberal bishops] have taken, or even if now I vote to change what's in there. . . . [To] the lives of the people [affected by our stance], I know that it's crucially and critically important. I'm not trying to sell that short. But our main role in the world is to call people to Christ and to help them be formed in His image and that's what we're here for and everything else that detracts us from that is to our detriment.

This delegate makes a point of saying that he's not trying to sell inclusionist pain short, and he also indicates his unhappiness with the incompatibility

language. At the same time, he says that his votes at General Conference are based, neither on his sympathy with the inclusionists, nor on his personal disagreement with the incompatibility language, but rather on his "role as a delegate" to "preserve, protect, and defend" the institution. His fundamental commitment is to being a "good steward of the church." Moreover not only does this delegate understand himself as having a particular role by virtue of being a delegate, he understands the church as having a particular role in the world by virtue of being the church; while his language does not focus on protecting the church from "the world," he does want to make sure that the church is able to fulfill its mission effectively, which may mean making decisions that do not support inclusionist goals.

The comments of this delegate and of other conservatives and moderates in this chapter thus far indicate further the inadequacy of a culture wars model in making sense of the UMC inclusion struggle. Were the conflict only between orthodoxy and progressivism as differing understandings of the nature of truth, we would not expect to see so much moderate and conservative attention paid to the church as an institution. An analytic perspective that focuses on institutions is needed at this point; the one with the greatest power for this case is the neo-institutionalist theory of contradictory institutional logics.

NEO-INSTITUTIONALISM

At its most basic, neo-institutionalism involves the claim that "actors and their interests are institutionally constructed" (DiMaggio and Powell 1991: 28), such that "institutions do not just constrain [individuals'] options: they establish the very criteria by which people discover their preferences" (ibid., 11).

To the extent that this neo-institutionalist claim is accurate, one cannot understand individuals without understanding the institutional contexts within which they make sense of the world and take action. Different institutional contexts "promote particular opportunities, ideologies, interests and identities" (Katzenstein 1998: 34) by producing "not only that which is valued but the rules by which it is calibrated and distributed" (Friedland and Alford 1991: 251). Institutions thus constrain individuals, both in terms of the ends that individuals value and the means that they are willing to use to achieve those ends; at the same time, individuals work both alone and collectively to make the best of the institutional orders within which they are embedded. In so doing, individuals and groups also have an effect on institutions. One might say that institutions create individuals, who then return the favor.

CONTRADICTORY INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS

Friedland and Alford's (1991) work on contradictory institutional logics represents a neo-institutionalist approach to conflict, one in which different

kinds of meaning can be in conflict, not just different groups of people with inherently contradictory interests.[20] Friedland and Alford define a number of central institutions of the contemporary capitalist west—"capitalist market, bureaucratic state, democracy, nuclear family, and Christian religion"—which they claim play important roles in "shap[ing] individual preferences and organizational interests." They propose further that each of these five institutions has "a central logic—a set of material practices and symbolic constructions—which constitutes its organizing principles and which is available to organizations and individuals to elaborate." Friedland and Alford understand these logics to be "symbolically grounded, organizationally structured, politically defended, and technically and materially constrained." Central to their overall argument is the idea that the five institutions are "potentially contradictory and hence make multiple logics available to individuals and organizations. Individuals and organizations transform the institutional relations of society by exploiting these contradictions."

This approach to institutions offers a complex and rich way to think about institutional conflict and the various forms it can take. Friedland and Alford argue that institutional conflict is best understood as a struggle "over the appropriate relationships between institutions, and by which institutional logic different activities should be regulated and to which categories of persons they apply," providing the example of the character Antigone as presented by the Greek dramatist Sophocles. Antigone, they argue, must bury her brother because "familial duty" demands it, but she must refrain from burying her brother because she has "a political obligation not to bury a traitor." What Antigone chooses to do will depend on which institution (family or city-state) she prioritizes in her decision-making.[21]

While the concept of contradictory institutional logics can help explain individual behavior, it is also helpful in understanding larger social conflicts. Friedland has elsewhere claimed that many social conflicts are really about institutional boundaries and "the criteria by which different activities are to be organized," and has further argued that "because individuals are whole persons whose lives transect different institutions they [often] attempt to transfer the logic of one institution to secure their interests in another."[22] Thus, attempts on the part of individuals and groups to remake institutions or manipulate the rules by which they work may involve "export[ing] the symbols and practices of one institution in order to transform another;" in turn, "people may mobilize to defend the symbols and practices of one institution from the implications of changes in others." Given the potential power of a contradictory institutional logics approach to studying conflict, Friedland and Alford claim that "a key task of social analysis is to understand those contradictions and to specify the conditions under which they shape organizational and individual action."

Friedland and Alford's model of contradictory institutional logics can be applied productively to the UMC inclusion struggle. First, though, an

extension of the model is necessary. Without a doubt, "material practices" and "symbolic constructions" play a key role in institutional logics, though I generally use the term "meaning systems" to refer to symbolic constructions. Beyond material practices and meaning systems, however, I suggest that an institutional logic also includes a specific form of consciousness and a particular set of priorities for action.[23] When one is acting in relation to one of Friedland and Alford's key institutions, one is carrying out actions, conceptualizing how things are and envisioning how they ought to be, experiencing one's situation and ordering one's activities around the logic relevant to that institution. The two logics most deeply at work in the UMC inclusion struggle are Christian religion and democracy; it is to a description of these logics that I next turn.

RELIGION AND DEMOCRACY

While each of Friedland and Alford's five central institutions incorporates a meaning system of some sort, this system is particularly prominent in religious logic, with the question of how things are and how they ought to be occupying center stage.[24] Christian logic, Friedland and Alford suggest, is that of transcendental truth.[25] Christian symbolic constructions revolve around a set of beliefs: in a divine being, in the nature of that being, in how humans have related to that being and to each other, in how people ought to relate to that being and to each other, and so on. This is not to say that the other elements of institutional logics are absent; the key institutional practice noted by Friedland and Alford is worship, the key form of consciousness would arguably be awareness of the spiritual, and the central priority, actually suggested by Friedland and Alford, is the "conver[sion of] all issues into expression of absolute moral principles accepted voluntarily on faith and grounded in a particular cosmogony."[26]

Religion, the state, the economy and the family are all familiar institutions to most people. Friedland and Alford's understanding of democracy as an institution requires some additional background. In an earlier project Alford and Friedland develop the idea of democracy as an institution with a particular, "democratic" logic from a pluralist political approach to the state in which "voters and diverse groups compete for influence in political situations" (1985: 10). Thus, Friedland and Alford's democratic logic prioritizes "[maximizing] participation [of the individual as a basic right] and the extension of popular control over human activity." Unsurprisingly, their organizational example of democratic logic is voting.

If in fact contradictory logics play a role in the UMC inclusion struggle, it ought to be possible to specify how they work for the two sides. To do so, I first consider those resisting inclusion at some length. I then return to the issue of democratic logic to suggest how it might be elaborated upon to make it more relevant for this case.

EVANGELICAL/CONSERVATIVE/MODERATE RELIGIOUS LOGIC: BOUNDARIES AND HOLINESS

> Orthodoxies are unique because of the special significance bestowed upon the symbolic boundaries [that] constitute the tradition. These boundaries are regarded as timeless. They are not supposed to change. Thus the duty of the faithful is to ensure that the boundaries remain intact, pure and undefiled. . . . . their stake in keeping the tradition sound and unqualified is high because their very identity and purpose as religious people (both collectively and individually) are bound to that mission. To stray from this task is to lose faith and to lose the hope of salvation. For the orthodox, the symbolic boundaries mean everything.[27]

United Methodist conservatives and evangelicals view the denominational homosexuality conflict as a struggle over the boundaries of the church: what they are, who sets them, how firm or open they are. These boundaries are about maintaining the church's distinctive identity, both in terms of what (and whom) they let in and what (and whom) they keep out.[28] United Methodist conservatives, along with those from other mainline denominations, thus stand in a complicated relationship with the idea of "inclusion," as with the claim of a Presbyterian that "Christianity is inclusive to all, but it's exclusive to those who won't submit to its standards" (Gorman 1997). The centrality of boundaries in institutional definition and protection leads some conservatives to the conclusion that maintaining Christian standards for sex trumps inclusion, as when a Presbyterian says, "I got a letter from a gay person who said, 'If they reject what I'm doing, they reject me.' I guess either we have to live with some people feeling rejected or else we have to be so inclusive that we're not the church of Jesus Christ any more" (Hutcheson and Shriver 1999: 112). Similarly, an evangelical UM says that there are "some things Jesus doesn't want in his church" (McAnally 1999). The strongest rejection of "inclusiveness" I encountered was in the writing of a former lesbian at General Conference 2000:

> Part of the Good News is this: *Jesus is not inclusive*. . . . God has a standard for admission [to the kingdom of Heaven] . . . God is exclusionary and so is this Jesus of whom we speak and claim to follow . . . Evidently, we serve a discriminatory Savior. Jesus was not murdered for His namby-pamby live-and-let-live approach to humanity. He was not beaten and left to die . . . because he made room for those He disagreed with in His Father's House. He was not spit upon and mocked because He held experience up above the authority of His Father's Word. [29]

Beyond the specific issue of inclusiveness, conservatives spoke frequently and positively about both the presence of boundaries and their role in

maintaining the church. A former homosexual, for example, argued that "the Church, unlike a social club, does have boundaries and does have absolute truth," and that "conservative Christians have never . . . veered from the apostolic faith . . . they still have that absolute standard." A conservative argued that doctrinal standards were important both as "a means of identity across the generations" and because "they help keep a body protected from subversive teaching [and] they form part of the boundary to determine who is out and who is in" (Abraham 1995: 39); similarly, an evangelical (Moore 1996: 90) reflected on the importance of boundaries in protecting the church from "the world" while providing its identity:

> In a community, we possess shared values, collective motivations, joint convictions, and common standards that identify who we are. To outsiders they will appear as limits. But these limits are actually our liberator, setting a point of departure, a frame of reference, and a recognizable destination. Without some accepted point of reference, the gift of freedom becomes [a] Trojan horse [introducing] foreign agents and material that destroy the tradition from within.

A conservative delegate at General Conference 2000 made a related argument on the plenary floor in his plea to hold the line on homosexuality:

> Our church continues to define the boundaries that make our lives together as United Methodists unique. We purposefully define how faith and order are to be lived out in light of Holy Scripture. We define everything from educational requirements for ordination to the necessary trust clauses regarding property . . . This [vote] is also a defining moment. It expresses how our denomination identifies the common ground that makes a family of faith. Our efforts to clearly mark boundaries of faith and order are not meant to deliberately hurt others as much as . . . to refine what makes us unique as far as The United Methodist Church.[30]

Given their importance, boundaries must be safeguarded vigilantly, since any breach of the boundary weakens its integrity. A conservative delegate compared homosexuality to robbery and murder in explaining why he was unwilling to accept "watered-down" language:

> [An] analogy would be [if I wanted] the Methodist Church to condone my organization of bank robbers or murderers. To me it's the same thing 'cause both of them are sins. [I hear them saying] they want the Methodist Church to change to condone a sin . . . I don't want my church taking a position with any wording to water down—in other words, that's getting a foot in the door. That'd be the first step toward getting it changed. That would be saying that we have people within the church who disagree on

> what a sin is, and I'm not willing to compromise that specific specificity regarding [homosexuality] as a sin.

Indeed, one evangelical has argued for institutionalizing the use of the term "heresy" to describe inclusionists and other "world-bearers," since "without the H-word, boundaries are not boundaries, standards are not standards, confessions are not confessions, and unity is not unity" (Case 1995), while a conservative caucus leader, observing that the denomination has a Committee for the Elimination of Institutional Racism, expresses his desire for a "Committee for the Elimination of Institutional Heresy" (Heidinger 2000: 81).

These perspectives suggest that for evangelicals and conservatives the church is the church because of its boundaries. Without the boundaries separating it from "the world," the church would cease to be the church. Moreover, because homosexuality represents an act that should be understood by all Christians as falling on the wrong side of the church-world boundary, homosexuality in the church is deeply implicated in both the location and strength of that boundary. Thus, the rejection of "homosexual practice" is basic to, and perhaps even inseparable from, the meaning system within the dominant UM religious logic as it has historically existed and continues to exist. Insofar as the institution of United Methodism is "institutionally constructing" its members, it is constructing them as homophobic and heterosexist. Thus, it might be appropriate to end this section with a quote from *Christianity Today* (Lindsell 1973) that neatly encapsulates the UM evangelical perspective on homosexuality:

> It is discrimination on the part of the church to exclude homosexuals, but it is not oppression. Discrimination lies at the heart of Christianity. The ax of God's holiness and righteousness divides the saved from the lost. . . . The final and conclusive argument against homosexuality does not come from the psychologists, the sociologists, the secularists or the humanists. It comes from God, who has spoken his word against it and has never stuttered in his speech.

HOLINESS AS SET-APARTNESS

> The test of discipleship is the way it is different from—and is an alternative to—the life-styles available in the world. If the life-style of Christian existence is so similar to, and can be confused with, the prevailing life-style of a culture, than discipleship has lost its "saltiness" and is good for nothing . . . This is the danger faced by Christian discipleship in Western culture, especially in United Methodism, which is too closely identified with the mainstream of American culture. (Nacpil 2000: 1698)

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but it is thrown out and trampled underfoot."[31] This "saltiness" refers to holiness, and more specifically, to holiness as set-apartness from "the world." John Wesley's attention to "scriptural holiness" received mention in Chapter Two; the concept of holiness has a long history in the Jewish and Christian traditions, based in large part on such biblical material as Leviticus 11:46.[32]

According to Douglas (1966), holiness refers to both the separation between the sacred and the profane and the separation of different "orders" or "classes" of things, so that both classes of things and the sacred and profane are in their proper places. Holiness also "requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong" (ibid., 54). Holiness is thus both a matter of distinction and of discrimination (in the positive sense of the term). Finally, if Douglas' (ibid., 58) assessment is correct, holiness as a set of religious practices is intended to serve as a symbolic system "which at every turn [inspires] meditation on the oneness, purity and completeness of God."

Much of the UMC resistance to full LGBT inclusion seems to revolve around the role and importance of holiness in United Methodism. For example, as noted earlier the prohibition of sexually active LGBT pastors is based on the requirement of "persons set apart by the Church" to "maintain the highest standards of holy living in the world."[33] A conservative theologian (Case 1994: 150, 154) argues that the church "is a called-out people with a mission and ministry different from those of all other communities, institutions, and agencies . . . essentially, the church is in a different business [where] anything short of God's high standard for holy living, including sexual purity, is sin." Similarly, though without using the word "holiness," a delegate told me that if the denominational rules on homosexuality are changed, "Methodists won't be different from everyone else and we are called to be different."

While it is not immediately obvious what holiness and homosexuality have to do with one another, the link becomes clearer when we understand holiness, not just as the condition of being set apart as God's people, but as the set of behaviors that confirm and sustain that position. Not only is homosexual practice condemned in the Bible in a general way, several of the condemnations (those in Leviticus and Romans) suggest that homosexual practice, as abomination and impurity, is the complete antithesis of holy living. Moreover, for evangelicals and conservatives, God has revealed the normative status of heterosexuality as well as the sinfulness of homosexual practice.[34] Thus, a conservative delegate can say he doesn't believe "that someone who is a Methodist can in fact be in advocacy of same-sex orientation. If so, then you're not a Methodist," and a conservative theologian can say that "the attempt to legitimize homosexuality" represents an opinion "that [denies] moral commitments foundational to Christianity" (Longden 1998). Similarly, a leader of a conservative caucus argues that:

> We don't believe faithful Christians disagree on this issue. We believe [in] being faithful to the doctrine as it's been held throughout the ages, and the tradition of the apostolic faith has always held that sex between men and men, and women and women, is aberrative. So we don't think faithful Christians can hold that homosexual practice is legitimate . . . they're certainly not faithful to the teaching of Scripture, nor to the tradition of the church.

Homosexuality is thus understood by evangelicals and conservatives as a behavior that must be ended in order to live in accordance with the scriptural holiness described in the Bible and passionately valued by Wesley. For example, a petition sent to General Conference 2000 read in part, "The church is to call all persons to holiness, which will include the rejection of homosexual conduct, and to seek to lead all persons to spiritual wholeness."[35] Similarly, on both the UM Decision 2000 video sent to delegates and the organization's website, the executive director of the Transforming Congregations movement asked delegates "to stand up and say there is an absolute. [It is] God's absolute. And we need to raise our sexual standards to meet his, and not lower it to meet our experience."[36] A moderate explained the role of scriptural holiness in Christian community:

> Every human being is a person for whom Christ died. However, all of us are, according to Paul's words, sinners who fall short of the mark. And it has to do with, then, the intention of our direction in life, our behavior. If my intention is to live a different life and I am trying to do that and I keep messing up, my intention is still toward living that different life. It is toward that scriptural holiness. However, if I come into the Christian community and say, "Okay, I want what you're offering, I want to name Jesus as Lord but I have no intention to live my life any differently, my intention is to continue doing the things that I feel I am natured to do," and if that's my intention, the Christian faith would say, "But that's not supported by the Scriptures. That's not scriptural holiness." And while the larger culture might say, "But as a human being, you have the right to choose," the church would say, "You absolutely do, but it's not supported by the Scripture, and in the context of this community from our truth source if your intention is not to live differently. . . . than it's going to be very hard for you to be connected to this community.

A conservative delegate made the same point:

> If you don't want to be a Christian, or if you don't go with the Bible, you can do whatever you want to do. But in the Christian church, if we're going to stay with the Scriptures, then within the Christian context this is something we say "this is not right" like a lot of other things are not right and we try to change those things in our lives.

Finally, a member of a conservative caucus (Morris n.d.) argued that:

> Since the time of early Israel, God has demanded a pattern of moral life that sets the people of God apart from unbelievers. But weak, anemic theology leads to weakened spirituality and the loss of moral standards. . . . If we could recover our authority, our mandate, our mission, our identity, and vocation, this whole battle would be nonsensical and non-existent in our Church. Insisting on the right to ordain practicing homosexuals within a denomination raised up to spread Scriptural holiness would be about as nonsensical as insisting on the right to serve pork barbeque in a mosque![37]

Holiness and boundaries stand in close relation to each other in evangelical religious logic. By affirming homosexuality, according to this logic, United Methodists would be rejecting holiness, allowing church boundaries to become so porous that "the world" would flood the church. In rejecting holiness and weakening boundaries, UMs would reject core elements of what makes Christianity Christian. Several conservatives commented on this last point in particular, as with a bishop who argued that "to choose to ordain practicing homosexuals would move us outside the boundaries of a global church" (Looney 1994). Similarly, a conservative caucus leader claimed that "to bless homosexual practice would be to deny [God's] essential order of things [as laid out in Scripture] and would in effect serve to replace biblical Christianity with another religion" (Case 2000: 6). A German theologian, commenting on the UMC LGBT struggle, agreed that:

> Here lies the boundary of a Christian church that knows itself to be bound by the authority of Scripture . . . if a church were to [cease] to treat homosexual activity as a departure from the biblical norm, and recognized homosexual unions as a personal partnership of love equivalent to marriage, such a church would stand no longer on biblical ground but against the unequivocal witness of Scripture. A church that took this step would cease to be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. (Pannenberg 1996: 37)

EVANGELICAL AND CONSERVATIVE STAKES: BOUNDARY DISSOLUTION AND CHAOS

Given the evangelical concern with denominational boundaries, it is not surprising that a number of evangelicals either sense a loss of boundaries or worry that one might be imminent if homosexuality became accepted. To these evangelicals, it is as though homosexuality is the final holding point. A delegate, for example, asks me, if we give up morality, where will it stop? Another delegate, speaking during committee debate, says that when we

move a peg it becomes a ladder upon which Christian doctrine can no longer stand. A conservative (Kuyper 1999: 46) argues that "the Bible's teaching about homosexuality is crystal clear" and asks, "[i]f we compromise on this teaching, which of our moral standards will be left?" Similarly, a caucus leader argues that:

> Evangelicals are not distressed . . . because they are homophobic. They are distressed by the likelihood that if church leaders can't find an authoritative word from Scripture about homosexual practice, they probably can't find an authoritative word about anything. . . . We must ask, does United Methodism have any bounding lines today? If so, are they clear? And are they being enforced? It would appear not. (Heidinger 2000: 144, 36)

A conservative delegate expresses a related fear that:

> When everything just kind of unravels, I think our children growing up today are becoming more and more confused because there's no standard for anything and so we are just kind of adrift . . . it's the core issue of, "What can we depend on? Is there *any*thing in life that is stable, that forms the heart of what we believe and how we live and who we are?"[38]

Some conservatives have gone so far as to say that the United Methodist Church would fall apart if the homosexuality prohibitions were lifted, as with the comment of the Faith and Order Committee chair during plenary floor debate that "if we allow a change at this point, [it] would destroy even further the tapestry [that] holds our church together."[39] Similarly, a conservative magazine argued that "our disciplinary statement on homosexuality . . . is the glue holding our denomination together. If this statement were to be altered in such a way as to remove the biblical prohibition against homosexuality, then the United Methodist Church as we now know it would be no longer" (Campbell 1998). With such language coming from evangelical leaders and from the floor of General Conference, it's not surprising that a moderate delegate explaining why he voted against the "faithful Christians disagree" compromise language despite personally agreeing with it[40] argued that "people are scared to death that if the church changes one jot or tittle of this language . . . then the church goes up in flames." Similarly, a bishop speaking in support of maintaining the incompatibility language reflected, "I wish the word 'incompatible' was not in the *Discipline*. But the fact is, there is fear that removal of this word would start an avalanche toward changing other parts of the *Discipline*" (Winkler 2000).

Interpreting evangelical, conservative and moderate resistance to LGBT inclusion as the outcome of religious logic at work helps us make more sense of the nature and depth of resistance among a majority of delegates.

Such an interpretation also explains two small puzzles. First, there is some evidence that conservatives and evangelicals report having positive relationships with individual LGBT UMs as friends, family members and congregants even as the same conservatives and evangelicals work feverishly to maintain the prohibitions against homosexuality in the *Discipline*. Second, while some conservative UMs and other mainline Christians proudly claim the mantle of exclusionism, most evangelicals and moderates with whom I spoke strenuously rejected the idea that they were excluding anyone from the church. I address these two findings in turn.

PERSONAL RELATIONS, INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES

On several occasions during General Conference, I noticed what appeared to be an odd disjuncture between evangelical and conservative commitment to "holding the line" on homosexuality, on the one hand, and evangelical and conservative reports of positive interactions with LGBT UMs, on the other. At a Good News breakfast briefing, a former homosexual spoke of a key AMAR leader, a lesbian, whom he considered a good friend. A conservative caucus leader told me that there were openly gay and lesbian members of the church he pastored, adding that he treated them as they deserved to be treated, as full members of the congregation. A Faith and Order committee conservative told me that she had a number of gay family members and friends, and they basically all lived and let live. She made a point of saying that she loved her gay friends and family members. Similarly, one of the strongest speakers against inclusion told the committee some of his closest relatives were "homosexuals," and that one had been in a lesbian relationship for 35 years. He said that the family depended on her and that he didn't try to "save" her. He also said that while he was ashamed of the homophobia he encountered, he was not ready to change what he believed was incompatible with Scripture. Similarly, a committee evangelical said that he personally had gay friends and relatives, but that the church could not compromise on this issue.

This disjuncture between claims of positive personal relationships and anti-inclusion commitments makes sense precisely because the struggle is institutional, rather than personal, in nature. These conservatives may be guilty of hurting deeply the friends, family members, and congregants they mention, but at least in their own eyes the issue is not one of rejecting individuals. It is about maintaining and protecting a religious institution.[41]

REJECTING THE EXCLUSIONIST LABEL

Evangelicals, moderates and some conservatives are generally quite resistant to the idea that they are excluding LGBT UMs from the church. One moderate

said, "I do not view it as being exclusion from the church. . . . I would not exclude anyone from the church," while the same conservative who told me she loved her gay friends and family members said that the churches she knew in her region were "not exclusionary. Persons who are gay and lesbian are welcome to participate. They are welcome in the congregation." During committee debate, one evangelical claimed that "lesbians and gays can come to our churches, can be involved in the life of the church, and can even minister in non-ordained ways." One conservative made a similar claim though he drew a more explicit distinction between an open-door policy and condoning a set of behaviors in stating that "the conservative people [I've talked to] would say to you that we don't have the intention of excluding homosexual people from the church. We have been pushed to the position of saying we can't accept that as an acceptable lifestyle."

Such, in sum, is the religious logic apparently accepted by moderates as well as evangelicals and conservatives. Before applying the concept of contradictory institutional logics to the heart of the inclusion struggle, it is necessary to say more about the democratic logic taken up by inclusionists.

INCLUSIONIST DEMOCRATIC LOGIC: EXTENDING THE TABLE

Alford and Friedland's (1985) use of democratic logic as a way of understanding pluralist political practices may not appear particularly helpful in the case of the UMC inclusion struggle, except insofar as General Conference (like U.S. elections) involves voting. However, it is possible to develop a more useful approach to the concept by rejecting the idea that this logic can only entail individual actions such as voting, and by extending the kinds of action that would "count" as following democratic logic to include, for example, political activism in a social change movement. Civil rights activism in the 1960s represents a good example, as it involves the goal of extending popular control over human activity; it merely focuses on group access rather than individual access. Indeed, one of the goals of the civil rights movement was to increase voter participation among African Americans.

If one takes activism as a legitimate material practice under democratic logic, those following such logic will carry out actions that move society toward equality, fairness, justice, enfranchisement and the like. Similarly, under the group-based extension of democratic logic presupposed by the incorporation of social change movements, images of how things are and how they ought to be center on the presence of inequality and the desire for greater equality, the existence of oppression and the intent to end oppression. Finally, the form of consciousness at the heart of democratic logic involves both a feeling of connectedness with one's own or others' suffering and a deep sense of the wrongness of inequality.

One last extension of Friedland and Alford's democratic logic model is necessary. Their understanding of maximizing the full participation of all people appears to be focused on the political realm only, and not other institutions. In contrast, my case calls for bringing democratic logic inside an institution—the church[42]—that provides an interesting opportunity to observe contradictory institutional logics in a setting not explicitly discussed by Friedland and Alford.

CONTRADICTORY INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS IN THE UMC INCLUSION STRUGGLE

With this conceptual apparatus established, it's time to revisit how those on both sides of the UMC inclusion struggle view the conflict. Inclusionists talk about inclusion at the heart of the Gospel, second-class citizenship in the Kingdom of God, institutionalized homophobia and heterosexism, full participation in the life of the church, being welcome or unwelcome, discrimination and oppression, the protection of pastors' rights, and even the denomination's reluctance to "embrace the full meaning of 'liberty and justice for all'" (Auer et al. 1999). Inclusionists sing "We Shall Overcome" and compare heterosexism within the church to racism within the church. They define the condemnation and exclusion of LGBT people as a justice issue and consider the statements in the *Discipline* a kind of "new style Jim Crow law" (Lawson 2000). By no means do they deny the saving work of Jesus Christ, nor do they reject a spiritually disciplined life of prayer, worship and right living, as they understand these. They get up to the Bible in the morning and go to sleep to it at night. And yet, for evangelicals, the inclusionists' theology, their hymn-singing, their dedicated congregational service, and their various disciplines of spiritual practice are rendered virtually invisible when they claim that Jesus would turn water into wine at a holy union, that a lesbian couple is today's Rosa Parks, that Jesus came to tear down boundaries and not to build them up, and that a sexually active gay man could be a perfectly appropriate pastor.

Evangelicals, conservatives and moderates reject the claim that homosexuality in the church is a civil rights or justice issue, defining it instead as a moral or theological issue. They understand homosexuality to be wrong, a sin, against the Scriptures. They don't understand how anyone can fail to see this and still call himself a Christian. They complain that the inclusionists are treating as political something that, understood properly, is about God's plan for humankind. For evangelicals, moderates and conservatives, it's not about civil rights, it's about holiness (as one delegate told me). Some members of these groups even repudiate the inclusionist claim that they have acted in an exclusionary manner. They have merely been working to order both their lives and God's church as God intended. They can't believe that the inclusionists, for all of their good conscience, could be this blind

to the institutional needs of the church as the Body of Christ. Indeed, as far as the evangelicals and conservatives are concerned, the inclusionists are bad for United Methodism. They spread discord. They do everything in their power to avoid being held accountable. They don't obey the rules. They fail to see that holiness requires boundaries between the church and the world. They would do better in another denomination, one where they are genuinely and officially welcome.

If this account of the two sides is accurate, it suggests the value of a neo-institutional interpretation of the UMC inclusion struggle. Inclusionists, believing themselves to have no other way to seek full participation in the life of their church, have wound up interweaving democratic logic with religious logic in all possible senses of both logics. They worship, organize and protest. They encounter the world as sacramental and as unjust. Their spirits are full of abiding gratitude and unyielding anguish. They simply want to be in the church, but they are unable to let the church simply be. The language they use in their appeals for inclusion, their rallies and civil disobedience, their support of Soulforce and the presence among them of various pastors for whom performing holy unions has an element of disobedience to it all point to the ways in which democratic logic is informing their situation and actions.

Evangelicals, conservatives and moderates respond by resisting energetically what they see as the incursion of an alien logic into the church. Their resistance involves "holding the line" on homosexuality. Their practice, perhaps ironically, involves organizing politically so that delegates sympathetic to their views will be the ones voting on how much or how little to change the denominational rulebook.[43] Their meaning system is focused on the need for scriptural integrity and doctrinal boundaries in a situation where these appear to be threatened, and their experience of the situation is, I would imagine, a mix of anger, concern, and a strong desire for control. Their priority is to maintain the church as they have known it and loved it, which means making sure that sin is not blessed and called holy.[44] Institutional logics are always politically defended; in this case, evangelical, moderate and conservative UMs are acting to defend the religious logic within which United Methodism has meaning for them.

This overall argument about the nature of the UMC inclusion struggle begins to move us toward an understanding of the depth of resistance faced by the inclusionists, not just from conservative caucuses but from the denomination as a whole. As Warner (1988: 286) has pointed out, "[t]he greatest vulnerability of Christian activism is that it is enmeshed in organizations dedicated to Christian worship. Conservative rhetoric of 'God,' 'salvation,' and 'faith' has more currency in such places than talk of 'human values,' 'justice' and 'service,' which occupies the high ground of secular discourse." It would be inaccurate to say that the inclusionists do not make use of the Bible to buttress their cause, or to accuse them of a lack of devotion to the church. At the same time, precisely because they rely so

heavily on democratic logic to seek their goals, their rhetoric and actions have what Warner would call "less currency" with most UMs than do the rhetoric and actions of the conservatives and evangelicals.

If this analysis is correct, the inclusionists are in a difficult position. To understand fully just how problematic their situation is, it is necessary to consider four further inclusionist dilemmas, related to but not reducible to the basic tension between democratic and religious logics: the link between individualism, modernity and the LGBT identity, the role of contradictory institutional logics within the denomination as an institution, the differing meaning of politics for inclusionists and those opposed to inclusion, and the anti-institutionalism of inclusionist boundary-challenging. I address these dilemmas in turn.

DEMOCRATIC LOGIC AND THE RISE OF THE (LGBT) INDIVIDUAL: THE FIRST INCLUSIONIST DILEMMA

If conservative, moderate and evangelical UMs want to protect the church from the invasion of the world, perhaps one reason is that "the world" no longer accepts the authority of the church to provide an overarching (Christian) meaning system for society as a whole. In fact, from the church's perspective, public acceptance of the "modern liberal understanding of persons as *autonomous individuals* who can decide for themselves" demonstrates the extent to which society has fallen away from "the Biblical view that persons are God's creatures, created to live in accord with God's will." [45] This understanding of people as autonomous individuals is connected with the rise of an LGBT identity and the demand for LGBT rights, and thus, however indirectly, to democratic logic. This link poses a dilemma for LGBT UMs, who must base their demands for inclusion on their deep-seated sexual identity even as those opposed to full LGBT inclusion see the attachment to such an identity as proof of an insufficient commitment to Christianity.

The idea that people have "selves" with "attributes (partly created anew, partly secularized religious ideas) of competence, obligation, and rights" is relatively new, historically speaking, as is the cultural setting in which "the rights, powers, and value of the self are central [social] institutions."[46] Only in the last few hundred years have people thought of themselves as individuals with specific needs and desires.[47] Sociologists of religion have observed the recent impact of this historical change on religion as an institution, as with Roof's[48] comment that "the real story of American religious life in this half-century is the *rise of a new sovereign self* that defines and sets limits on the very meaning of the divine."

Some research suggests that the rise of the LGBT identity is intimately interwoven with the development of the autonomous self. For example, Frank and McEneaney (1999) argue that over the last half-century, people around the world have increasingly come to be constituted as individuals in the sense

of having ultimate authority over their own lives. This change has led to sex becoming more associated with individuality, pleasure and identity, which in turn has allowed for the increasing legitimation of same-sex relations as they have come to be seen as a human right (ibid., 916–917). Individualism thus "constitutes persons who act as the authors of their own destinies" and "provides authorized claimants for lesbian and gay rights" (ibid., 916). Similarly, Weeks (1998: 35) ties the "sexual citizen" to "the new primacy given to sexual subjectivity in the contemporary world." This argument, especially in the context of the LGBT history presented in Chapter Two, suggests why a gay man can claim that "I find my identity as a gay man as basic as any other identity I can lay claim to. Being gay is a more elemental aspect of who I am than my profession, my class or my race,"[49] as well as why this claim is so historically recent.

The sense of homosexuality as a deep-seated identity, a core element of one's very self, came up among many inclusionists within and outside the UMC. One inclusionist (Wulf 1998a: 57) claimed that "my identity as a gay man goes to the very core of my existence." Rose Mary Denman (1990: 201) argued that people "can't love me and hate my lesbianism. I don't do lesbian. I am lesbian." Mark Williams (2001), upon coming out as a gay pastor, told his congregation that "a core part of my identity has always been my awareness that I'm a United Methodist . . . The fact that I'm gay is also a core part of my identity. I'm proudly as much a practicing gay man as I am a practicing United Methodist." "Lesbian Evangelist" Jane Spahr told a conservative Presbyterian, "It's our very being you're saying no to" (Robinson 2001b), and Soulforce founder Mel White commented in his memoir (1994: 177) that "I was no more 'ex-gay' than I could be 'ex-human.'" One inclusionist told me that:

> Sexual orientation [is] an integral part of a human being's being . . . my sexual orientation is very much who I am and how I see the world and how I experience things [whereas evangelicals see it as just] behaviors. [To me, it's] at the very essence of who we are as people. . . . so for them, [homosexuals] do those things but they can still come to our church. And they're not getting that [the message sent is that at] a gay person's very being, they're wrong and evil and are away from God. And so, why would someone want to come and be in the church that gives that message? I think it's a difference between what they understand as sexual acts and what we understand as sexual orientations.

In contrast, conservative, evangelical and moderate Christians resist the inclusionist focus on sexual identity, seeing it as a prime example of bringing "the world" into the church. One moderate delegate told me, "I don't think the Bible understands labeling people as straight or gay . . . therefore I find it a uniquely hard thing to talk about in a biblical, Christian way." An evangelical Episcopalian (Temple et al. 1998: 46) argued along the same lines that "I

do not stand before God as a gay or straight, heterosexual or homosexual . . . when I begin to identify myself that way that's part of the whole process of turning away from God." Stein (2001: 216) similarly observed that "to traditionalists, lesbians and gay men epitomized the unencumbered self and all the flexibility and refashioning that such a self implied. [They] were problematic because they signified a retreat into self-indulgence and individualism and flouted the moral authority of centuries of tradition." Some moderate UMs found the inclusionist movement problematic for just this reason; as one delegate argued, "It's not all about sex. . . . That's not the most important part of our being. . . . It's not about the 'me-ism' of modern culture: what's in it for me? How does it make me feel good?" Another delegate echoed this point:

> "The whole world exists to fill me. If I desire something, I have a right to have it." [These ideas are not consonant with Christianity as I understand it.] I find the whole discussion problematic . . . Too much of the discussion . . . plays into the hands of a society which says your sexuality is the most interesting defining aspect of who you are and if you don't express it you have missed a huge part of your humanity.

These comments indicate conservative, moderate and evangelical frustration that inclusionists are not taking scriptural holiness as seriously as they ought to. If they were, their identity as Christians remade in Christ would supersede all other identities, particularly any identities that run counter to God's expressed will for humankind. Thus, when LGBT UMs claim that their sexual identities are coterminous with their religious identities those opposing full LGBT inclusion have several different grounds for negative response. By adopting "the prevailing [individualist] assumptions of contemporary life," inclusionists demonstrate to other UMs that they do not understand the nature and meaning of personhood in a Christian way. The inclusionist claim that sexual identities are core identities may be understood as a refusal to prioritize God, Christianity and United Methodism. Finally, inclusionist reliance on the importance of sexual activity as part of the appeal for full LGBT inclusion can sound, not merely "modern" and "individualist," but frivolous to other UMs who (for homophobic and heterosexist reasons) see same-sex sexual acts as "merely" selfish practices intended to make the participants "feel good." As long as individualism, modernity and homosexuality are tied so deeply together, and as long as those opposed to full LGBT inclusion find all three to run counter to the Christian ethos, inclusionists will face a dilemma in how to justify their case.

INTRA-INSTITUTIONAL CONTRADICTORY LOGICS: THE SECOND INCLUSIONIST DILEMMA

The United Methodist Church, for all of its reliance on religious logic, also incorporates democratic logic, though not in a way that has thus far aided

the inclusionists. Stout and Cormode (1998: 77) observe that while institutions like religion stand alone conceptually, specific religious organizations are always "interdependent and contradictory," "embody[ing] logics from more than one [institution]." They note, for example, that:

> In addition to supplying transcendent meaning and truth, religion as an institution in the (modern) United States has capitalist-like logics for honoring the accumulation of capital resources, state-like logics for legitimating bureaucratic reporting systems [and other logics]. As an institution, then, coexisting within a larger organizational field, religion is both more and less than the symbolic universe and sacred canopy that its primary logic specializes in. It has *both* a defining "truth" logic and secondary logics.[50]

One of the United Methodist Church's secondary logics is political. Friedland and Alford (1991: 256) remark on such contradictions as bureaucratic states relying on democratic mechanisms to legitimate their decisions; the substitution of "religious organizations" for "bureaucratic states" describes the United Methodist Church well. As the denomination's webpage notes,

> Checks and balances are built into all aspects of church life. The organization of the denomination resembles that of the U.S. government. The General Conference is the top legislative body; the nine-member Judicial Council is the "supreme court;" and the Council of Bishops is similar to the executive branch.[51]

Gentile's (2000) claim that "the church of Jesus Christ [is] not a democracy but a Theocracy" is thus only partly right; the United Methodist Church is run through legislative, administrative and judicial factions modeled on U.S. democratic structures. Moreover, the process of revising the denominational lawbook every four years through the votes of elected delegates is remarkably pluralist, even if it is not devoid of power struggles. The Confessing Movement's (1999) incongruous reference to the denomination's "constitutionally established doctrinal standards" is indicative of the level of institutional contradiction within the denomination as a whole.

If the denomination blends religious and democratic logics, this would seem to bode well for the inclusionists, who similarly blend these two logics. Ironically, it is the very presence of the mix of logics within the institution, and presumably approved there by most if not all United Methodists, that makes the inclusionists look particularly unreasonable. After all, the mechanisms are theoretically in place for them to attain their goals through a legitimate process, rather than needing to shut that process down. Evangelicals use this fact to take issue with inclusionists, as with the comment of one that "one of the remarkable things about the

United Methodist Church is how democratic its policymaking is, which really means that there's an obligation on the part of the clergy to follow those policies once they're adopted by the General Conference."[52]

Intra-institutional democracy also works against the inclusionists because the denomination uses simple majoritarian votes on the plenary floor of General Conference, thus the irony of a mere two-thirds of delegates voting down a petition stating that faithful Christians disagree on whether homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching. United Methodism remains strongest in places that are least likely to be supportive of LGBT concerns, such as the U.S. Deep South, and it is growing most rapidly in culturally antigay parts of the world, such as much of Africa.[53] Presuming that there is a culture war element in this struggle, the increasing number of Southern U.S. and African (for example) votes at General Conference may represent democracy in the sense of proportional representation of United Methodists at the meeting, but its outcome is a failure of democracy in the sense of maximizing participation for LGBT UMs. Even the democratic element within United Methodism has not thus far served the inclusionists well, and is not likely to do so in the immediate future.

POLITICAL "MORAL ALCHEMY:" THE THIRD INCLUSIONIST DILEMMA

> It is now almost a cliché to say that secular modes of thinking and political habits of behavior have invaded the life of our Church. The mechanics of political protest . . . regularly accompany [General Conference]. The whole panoply of 1960s activism was brought to bear on the 2000 General Conference in Cleveland: activists wearing symbolic clothing, staging sit-ins, performing street theatre, disrupting public meetings, forcing arrests, and writing letters from jail.[54]

One might, at this point, decide on the basis of the evidence that the evangelicals are simply good Christians doing what good Christians must do, and that the inclusionists are simply selfish troublemakers. Such an assessment should sound reminiscent of moral alchemy, and indeed I argue in this section that the politicization of inclusionists (but not, or not as often, of conservatives) represents a complicated case of moral alchemy.

Evangelical caucus members are quite open about the political nature of their activities. One caucus strategic director pointed out that "it's a pretty standard United Methodist statement of ethos that theology naturally leads to ethics and politics . . . in one sense politics is simply the decision-making process. We would expect conflict and contention." Another organizer described General Conference 2000 to me as a "political convention" (to which UM Decision 2000 brought a team of 78 caucus members) and

explained in some detail (in 2000) how the conservative caucuses would organize for General Conference 2004, including which Annual Conferences would be paid the most attention in terms of electing delegates and when precisely the caucus would expect to start seeing results. The same organizer told me that what happened in Cleveland was the result of eight years of intensive organizing, both at the Annual Conference and Jurisdictional levels, that caucus members were on the road all the time going to meetings, and that the evangelical success in holding the line on homosexuality at General Conference 2000 was half due to caucus organizing and half due to the fact that most UMs support the current position. Other caucus members made similar comments (though often in somewhat less detail), and none were shy about claiming that evangelical caucuses use political approaches to accomplish their agenda.

Clearly, the evangelicals are in some sense as "guilty" as the inclusionists of drawing on democratic logic to defend the church they love.[55] Nevertheless, the fact that the evangelicals use politics in pursuit of a religious logic goal tends to become obscured. I would argue that this process happens through institutional moral alchemy: the evangelicals are institutionally normalized while the inclusionists are institutionally stigmatized. Such moral alchemy, which helps explain both the insider-outsider dynamic visible at General Conference 2000 and the evangelicals' success more generally, results in the evangelicals being privileged and the inclusionists disadvantaged. Arguably, the normalization/stigmatization process works as follows:

While both the inclusionists and the evangelicals are engaging in political activity in their attempts to jockey for control over the voting floor at General Conference, only the inclusionists are being defined as political, both by most of the moderates with whom I interacted, and by the denomination as an institution (despite the latter's own internally democratized structures). The politics of voting is rendered invisible before the politics of demonstrating, perhaps because voting itself is institutionalized in the denomination whereas demonstrations represent disruptions and challenges to the institution. Similarly, because of the way that "average" delegates dress, the suits and ties of the conservatives are normalized when compared to the plethora of LGBT symbols exhibited by the inclusionists. The LGBT symbols serve to mark off the inclusionists as different; the suits and ties of the conservatives suggest continuity with traditions of dressing respectfully for an event that is at the heart of the denomination and therefore worthy of respect.

Similarly, rhetorical practices tended to support the conservatives and marginalize the inclusionists. For example, during an argument between former homosexuals and LGBT UMs, one of the former homosexuals derided the LGBT people for saying "it's *my* church," as though to point out how that made them more committed to their own goals than to the church. Evangelicals, in contrast, were more likely to say, "It's *the* church,"

to reify and externalize the institution. In so doing, they downplayed the extent to which their actions were saying "it's my church." Conservatives were thus able to work toward their own political goals while avoiding language that would mark them as bad Christians. Similarly, conservatives and evangelicals were able to couch their arguments for holding the line on homosexuality in terms of the historical church and the Bible, while the inclusionists were forced to talk about such "unreasonable" things as their life-changing experiences and their sense of the Holy Spirit leading the way toward change. Even the title of an inclusionist anthology (*The Loyal Opposition*) that was published shortly before General Conference 2000 suggested the challenges faced by the inclusionists; others did not accept the inclusionist claim that it was possible to be both loyal and oppositional, and certainly ecclesiastical disobedience (which some anthology authors supported) did not come across as a loyal type of action.

This last point leads to an observation that may be uncomfortable for inclusionists. In Chapter Two, I discussed the extent to which the particular history of the LGBT identity has politicized it. This politicization does not mean that LGBT people walk around every day looking for opportunities to accuse heterosexual people of homophobia; far from it. The castigation of inclusionists as political by other UMs, however, is clearly accurate at least in some descriptive sense, or it would not be possible to apply a contradictory institutional logics analysis to the inclusion struggle. LGBT UMs and their allies may spend the majority of their time doing things other than protesting, and it may be a relatively small percentage of inclusionist pastors who bless holy unions specifically as acts of ecclesiastical disobedience. However, there is a basic political core to the inclusionist experience that neither can nor should be denied. When inclusionists see evangelicals adding homosexuality-related prohibitions to the *Discipline*, inclusionists most readily interpret these actions through an inequality lens, which in turn contributes to the further politicizing of their identity. When inclusionists are inclined to express their pain using personal and political (rather than communal and religious) language, the expression of that pain, however legitimate, reinforces the evangelical view of the inclusionists as missing the boat on God's religious demands of them. Though the inclusionists did use biblical language to express their pain, they tended not to do so in front of other UMs (at least insofar as I observed at General Conference 2000); their public language was undeniably political. To inclusionists who would respond that of course their language was political since their situation was one of political inequality, I can only agree while adding that this language is part of the culture that condemns them as insufficiently United Methodist in the eyes of other church members. The fact that heterosexual allies tend to be already (or historically) active in politically progressive movements undoubtedly pushes the politicization still further.

Both sides are clearly engaging in politics. Nonetheless, the social, cultural and historical contexts in which LGBT people in general and UM

inclusionists in particular have emerged have caused the latter to have a visible affinity with democratic logic.[56] If, following Weber (1946: 284), one takes the phrase "elective affinity" to refer to a resonance between ideas and interests, it seems that the kinds of rhetoric one might find as part of democratic logic—participation, enfranchisement, inclusion—are precisely the kinds of rhetoric used by the inclusionists, and exactly the opposite of the kinds of rhetoric used by the evangelicals. Conservative caucuses may act politically, but inclusionists act politically, do so for reasons defined as political, and also symbolize politics in the minds of other UMs. They are, in short, burdened with an excess of political significance.

As noted at various points throughout the book, labeling inclusionists "political" essentially delegitimates their situation and claims. Moon (2000: 110) observes that a "major stumbling block for gay people in the church is that homosexuality is equated with politics, fallenness and secularity—in short, things most churchgoers consider to be the opposite of church." It is true that some moderate delegates distinguish between the middle, the left and the right (or the middle, the extreme left and the extreme right). In most cases, however, if moderates see conservatives and evangelicals as "guilty" of anything, it is simply that they are "guilty" of being "ultra-UMs," while moderates see inclusionists as guilty of being "extremists" and "radicals" (and thus, of being insufficiently United Methodist). Perhaps this is simply more moral alchemy: the position officially promulgated by an organization is not usually seen as either "political" or "extreme" while the position that challenges the organization's official position can easily become defined as both political and extreme. Either way, the evangelicals seem reasonable, the inclusionists unreasonable. Even if United Methodists in general weren't already inclined to agree with conservative caucus members regarding holy unions and gay pastors, they are deeply invested in their church as an institution and do not approve of wholesale challenges to it of the sort that the inclusionists appear to be carrying out.[57]

At General Conference 2000, inclusionists acted in ways that they thought most feasible, drew on the analysis of the situation that appeared to fit best, experienced the pain of exclusion basic to their collective and individual histories, and prioritized witnessing to others by any means necessary. In thus adopting democratic logic, they contributed to a chain reaction in which their devalued status was reconfirmed and reproduced. It would be unduly harsh to blame the inclusionists for their situation. At the same time, if this analysis is correct, it suggests that the inclusionists were, in a sense, "aiding and abetting" their opponents by their choice of approach. This is a personally painful and sharply controversial conclusion to reach, and yet it is the only conclusion that seems to me to fit with the denominational situation as it stands. Inclusionist use of overt political actions such as demonstrations served to obscure further the political machinations of conservative caucuses while marking inclusionists themselves as political rather than religious, and as disloyal to the United Methodist Church as an institution. The protests

undoubtedly benefited inclusionists in a number of ways, not least in terms of salvaging their dignity, but the protests do not appear to have contributed to the attainment of inclusionist institutional goals.[58]

At this point, it's worth revisiting the four mechanisms of homophobia and heterosexism (the ick factor, master status, moral alchemy, symbolization) in light of the inclusionist adoption of democratic logic at General Conference 2000. LGBT United Methodists try to address these mechanisms in various ways. Faced with the ick factor, they try to turn others' attention to their commitment to United Methodism and to the injustices they experience; they also downplay the sexual component of their homosexuality in public conversations. Faced with the other three mechanisms, their responses are more complex. For example, they are designated as political extremists, a master status that is challenging to address. In response to this designation, they spend most of their time worshipping, accompanying the choir, and working to deepen their relationship with Christ. At General Conference, however, they seem to accept the political extremist designation, going so far as to shut down the denominational assembly. Faced with the moral alchemy that interprets them in bad faith, they try hard to witness to their reality in keeping with their deep belief that if their opponents would just get to know them, it would not be possible to maintain such bad faith. However, once the LGBT UMs begin to protest, they inadvertently make it easier for both their opponents and any undecided UMs to interpret them in bad faith.

The LGBT UM response to symbolization is particularly poignant. In seeking to be known for the people they are, LGBT UMs struggle to get out from under the negative symbolism that weighs them down. At the same time, by bedecking themselves in rainbow ribbons, pink triangle buttons and other LGBT symbolism, and by holding a rally and protesting, LGBT UMs could be said to continue their reliance on symbolism, albeit the positive symbolism of LGBT pride. As noted in Chapter Four, it's clear why a devalued group of people might finally need to disrupt their degradation ceremony by halting business as usual, however temporarily. Because of the gap between inclusionist and conservative interpretations, however, the inclusionist attempt to claim personhood and reject negative symbolization is transmuted via moral alchemy into conservative "proof" that inclusionists represent politics rather than proper Christianity. At the end of the day, the inclusionists have in fact confirmed the conservatives' perception of them, despite intending to do exactly the opposite if I understand their hopes correctly.

TEARING DOWN BOUNDARIES: THE FOURTH INCLUSIONIST DILEMMA

One last important distinction, in the priorities of the two logics and not just the two sides, requires attention. The inclusionists want equality and

the evangelicals want holiness, and while both inclusionists and evangelicals are very attentive to boundaries, their boundary-related goals are completely opposite; as one inclusionist observed, the inclusionists are working to demolish boundaries and the evangelicals to maintain them. It is not surprising that inclusionists spoke against drawing lines or sought to challenge them, while most other United Methodists supported drawing lines or "holding" them. While the inclusionists do not under any circumstances want to destroy the United Methodist Church they do want to transform it, but their definition of transformation is viewed by other United Methodists as destructive. For example, an inclusionist says that when business as usual destroys the dignity of children of God, business as usual has no right to go on. Another inclusionist says that, since the church has not given inclusionists any legitimate way to seek access, they should "irritate away."

Ironically, one of the contexts in which inclusionists use specifically religious language is to argue for the relaxing or dissolution of denominational boundaries, as in the following examples—hardly a reassuring use of religious language for other United Methodists:

> The problem of Jesus is that he accepted everyone. His love was indiscriminate, all-inclusive, and folks couldn't stand that, really. So in the course of things, this led to . . . Jesus' accursed death on the cross. . . This is at the heart of Jesus' ministry. The problem for us has always been, I think, how do you symbolize a community without laws and without boundaries, a community with no outsiders, no defenses, a community where everyone is welcome and to which everyone belongs whether others want them to or not. United Methodist practice of open communion tries to symbolize such a community; so, too, I think, the holy union service in Sacramento.[59]

> The inclusion of [LGBT people] into the full covenantal life of the Church is not a peripheral issue . . . It is at the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are to be about the business of mercy and love and justice; of breaking down, not building up, the restrictive walls [that] divide us; of extending God's acceptance and blessing to all people.[60]

> A delegate says that the grammar of the Ten Commandments do not point toward the erection of boundaries. Jesus came pushing against boundaries. It was the keepers of rules, the speaker says, that put Jesus on the cross. The people who are gay or lesbian in my Annual Conference, he says, are people of integrity and order and are pushing against boundaries. (Field notes, May 7)

In some cases, such appeals to Jesus carry over to the early church, as with a Sacramento 68 pastor's contention that "the writings of the early church make clear that the Holy Spirit of the Living God is not limited by the boundaries we humans create to define who is 'in' and who is 'out.'"[61]

Some inclusionists invoked Jesus as boundary-destroyer to argue that the church itself was failing Jesus' mission, as when a pastor told me that sometimes it felt like belonging to the church was participating in the same institution that Jesus spent his life trying to tear down. Similarly, a Sacramento 68 pastor drew on the Bible to challenge the church as an institution when he said, "I fear the 'idolatry of the [UMC] cross and flame'" and argued that UMs "fear a split in the church more than we fear the damming of the waters of justice and the slowing of the stream of righteousness to a trickle."[62] In his contribution to *The Loyal Opposition*, a prominent UM ethicist insisted that "when there is a conflict between our loyalty to church law and our loyalty to God, clearly God must come first."[63]

Whatever one's response to these statements, they all involve at least some degree of anti-institutionalism whether implicit or explicit. They may capture a beautiful vision of Jesus, but they put personal experience above institutional survival. They may reflect spiritual wisdom, but they miss basic sociological wisdom about the need of institutions to maintain boundaries in order to remain institutionally secure.[64] Indeed, this heartfelt witnessing fails to grasp that, to the great majority of UMs, church is not supposed to be a site of struggle, certainly not of the sort involving civil disobedience and the arrest of bishops. In contrast, the words and actions of the inclusionists indict their beloved denomination as an oppressor that must be overthrown, even as the UMC remains their beloved denomination in which they want, more than anything, to be openly LGBT pastors, same-sex couples wed within the church, and members whose sexuality is not a problem because "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."[65] Indicting one's denomination, however beloved the denomination may be, will not ultimately win enough institutional friends and influence enough people in high places to force change rapidly.[66]

INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN CULTURE WARS, HOMOPHOBIA, SOCIAL CLOSURE AND CONTRADICTORY INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS

As demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven, inclusionists see a clear connection between denominational homophobia and heterosexism, on the one hand, and various political analyses of their situation, on the other. This connection is only one of several intersections between the different processes discussed in this book that work together to deepen the challenge for inclusionists.

Though the conflict between democratic and religious logics may seem to replace the culture wars approach in making sense of the conservative and evangelical perspective, the two actually supplement each other well. If a neo-institutionalist analysis describes the tension between two "institutional logics," a culture wars analysis describes the tension between two "moral logics." For UMs opposed to full LGBT inclusion, the orthodox approach to truth described by Hunter is part of the meaning system within their religious logic.[67] In contrast, because the inclusionists' progressivist approach to truth is so deeply tied to acceptance of modernity and its values (as Hunter observes), it fits readily into "the world" from which UMs opposed to full LGBT inclusion are protecting the church.[68]

That said, while many UMs may view truth from an orthodox rather than a progressivist position, denominational rejection of inclusionist goals cannot be reduced to a culture war. One reason that conservatives, evangelicals and moderates find it hard to treat inclusionist religiosity with good faith is that inclusionists are so demonstrably political, whatever else they may be. This observation suggests another way in which the different processes discussed in this book may work together: once the inclusionists interpret their situation in terms of homophobia, heterosexism and social closure, the adoption of democratic logic follows readily. As noted in Chapter Seven, if the correct analysis is political, it is easy to determine that the correct solution is also political.

One result of this particular intersection of processes is that, while the inclusionists blend both religious and democratic logics—they do, after all, pray, take communion, read the Bible and believe that Jesus is Lord—their use of religious logic as UM Christians may not be particularly visible to other UMs at General Conference but their use of democratic logic is jarringly visible. This juxtaposition of invisible religiosity and visible politics is not surprising. At a denominational assembly, it is normal and expected that people will participate in worship and will serve on assembly committees, while it is not normal or expected that people will wear paraphernalia understood to be political or will shut down the assembly. The inclusionists do both: they wear paraphernalia and shut down the assembly even as they participate in worship and serve on assembly committees. The tragedy of inequality in the church is that without homophobia, heterosexism and social closure, inclusionists would not find it necessary to blend religious and democratic logics at all. There would be no need to work for inclusion if they were completely included. Inclusionists would be free to lay down their struggles, at least on this front, and be seen by the world simply as UM Christians. My guess is that, like other Christians, many "former inclusionists" would use the time and energy freed up from inclusion activism to increase their contributions to church life and evangelism.

When inclusionists respond to homophobia, heterosexism and social closure by adopting democratic logic, however, the moderate inclination to protect the denomination seems to result in at least some moderates

taking up the conservative preoccupation with institutional boundaries. It may be that General Conference 2000 held the line on homosexuality because there were very few moderate delegates elected. However, it also may be that those moderates who were elected found the conservative case more compelling than the inclusionist case, both in terms of their views of homosexuality ("culture wars") and in terms of loyalty to the institution (neo-institutionalism). A perception of inclusionists as disloyal, moreover, may have been at least as serious a concern for some moderates as the issue of homosexuality itself. After all, inclusionists appear to be symbolized as political extremists as much as they are symbolized as sexual deviants.

Both inclusionist and other UM perspectives incorporate several different components. The inclusionist perspective mixes religious progressivism, experiences of homophobia, heterosexism and social closure, and a blend of religious and democratic logics. The evangelical, moderate and conservative position combines religious orthodoxy, religious institutional logic, and protection of the institution. Each combination deepens the stance of the side in question, while the two combinations in encounter with each other appear to further fuel the conflict.

Considered through the analytic perspectives of the previous three chapters and this one, the UMC inclusion struggle appears complex, deep-seated, and intractable. The first two of these adjectives are clearly accurate; the third may be less so. While there is no neat solution that would allow the inclusionists to end the struggle in their favor tomorrow, there may be possibilities worthy of discussion. I consider some of these possibilities in Chapter Nine after discussing how the UMC inclusion struggle might shed light on both mainline Protestant sexuality struggles more generally and American attitudes about homosexuality.

9 Implications and Possibilities

> [They] shall beat their swords into plowshares . . . (Isaiah 2:4)

MAY 12, 2000

As exhilarating, infuriating and exhausting as General Conference 2000 was, it ended on May twelfth and we all returned to our regular lives. Conservatives, evangelicals and moderates went home pleased with General Conference's willingness to hold the line on homosexuality. Inclusionists went home grieving General Conference's unwillingness to welcome LGBT UMs fully into the life of the church. Since that day, UMs have gone about their regular lives, religious and otherwise. The church gathered again for General Conference 2004, where the lines on homosexuality were held once again and protesters rose up once again. And after General Conference 2004, UMs once again returned to the mix of mundane and mystical that characterizes life in a community of faith.

This book opened at General Conference 2000, at a high point of conflict over homosexuality in the UMC. Its conclusion is inspired by the time of returning home, when emotions ebb somewhat and inclusionists ask themselves, "what next?" Much of this chapter similarly considers what might happen next in the struggle. I begin, however, with two larger questions. First, how does the UMC inclusion struggle help us understand mainline Protestant homosexuality conflicts more generally? Second, can the UMC case provide insights about American public opinion on homosexuality?

MAKING SENSE OF THE "PROTESTANT MIDDLE"

> [Those in the Methodist middle] realize that our *Book of Discipline* asks us to live with the paradox of welcoming homosexual persons into our churches because they are persons of sacred worth, while at the same time stating that we believe homosexual behavior is outside of the guidelines of Scripture and Christian teaching. Those in the Methodist Middle are

> willing to live with that paradox, and they are unwilling either to exclude homosexual persons or to condone homosexual practice.[1]

As the sexuality struggle has developed across mainline Protestant denominations, the "Protestant middle," defined as those neither actively seeking inclusion nor actively working against it, has often gone unheard. At the same time, the middle is frequently described in negative terms, both among those on "the ends" and among researchers studying the struggles. For example, the Protestant middle has been characterized as ambivalent, messy, muddled, mushy, puzzled, and unengaged.[2] Most of these disparaging terms seem to be based on the fact that the Protestant middle holds a "paradoxical" position on homosexuality. Observers do not understand why the middle can't take a single stand and hold a consistent position on homosexuality, whether inclusionist or not.

While the Protestant middle may hold a paradoxical position for a number of reasons, one of them is likely that the middle has integrated both religious and democratic logics in its thinking, albeit in a different way than inclusionists. Weston, speaking of Presbyterians, has explained the Protestant middle's integration of logics well:

> To loyalists, the boundary between the church and the world is crucial. Therefore, they see no inconsistency, and much practical merit, in following a liberal policy of homosexual equality in civil society, and a conservative policy of biblical authority in the church . . . the difference is not hypocrisy, but follows the loyalist principle that the church is an institution set apart from the world.[3]

Among UMs, General Conference voting patterns indicate that both moderates and conservatives support LGBT civil rights outside the church even as they hold the line against partnered lesbian or gay pastors and holy unions. For example, in the three General Conferences since General Conference 1992, delegates have added new LGBT-related prohibitions to the *Book of Discipline* while steadfastly refusing to delete the 1992 paragraph on civil rights for LGBT people, despite having petitions available[4] with which to do so. In 1996, delegates even added a resolution supporting lesbians and gays in the military, which reads:

> The United States of America, a nation built on equal rights, has denied the right of homosexuals to actively serve their country while being honest about who they are. Meanwhile, the United Methodist Church is moving toward accepting all people for who they are. The United Methodist Church needs to be an advocate for equal civil rights for all marginalized groups, including homosexuals. Conclusion: The U.S. military should not exclude persons from service solely on the basis of sexual orientation.[5]

This resolution is clearly based on democratic logic. Moreover, at various points during the sexuality struggle, three-quarters or more of delegates voted to hold the line on homosexuality while more than four-fifths supported both the equal rights paragraph and the resolution on equal access to the military.[6] At least some of the same delegates are voting in favor of the equal rights and equal access language and voting against LGBT pastors and holy unions.

Longitudinal survey research on UMC delegate views of homosexuality-related issues also supports the claim that delegates differ substantially in how they feel about opportunities for "homosexuals" inside and outside the church.[7] In 1992, 92 percent of delegates surveyed agreed that "homosexuals should not be discriminated against when it comes to employment outside the church;" in 1996, 2000 and 2004, 93 percent of delegates surveyed agreed with this statement. The high percentage of delegates in agreement indicates that both moderates and some conservatives support equal rights for LGBT people outside the church. Inside the church, the numbers are dramatically lower; despite the fact that fewer than half of the respondents agreed that homosexuality was a sin[8] most respondents did not support either the ordination of "homosexuals"[9] or "homosexual marriages" within the UMC.[10]

If this observation about democratic and religious logics among moderate and conservative delegates holds for other UMs and for members of other denominations, it helps explain why LGBT inclusion is moving forward more rapidly in institutions associated with civil society (the workplace, the healthcare system, the government) than in religious institutions. Mainline Protestants are comfortable taking "activist" stances to foster LGBT inclusion in civil society even as they struggle against such inclusion in the church. The "paradox" of the Protestant middle may similarly explain why secular organizations in civil society (such as public hospitals) are more amenable to LGBT inclusion than religiously affiliated organizations (such as Protestant hospitals). Religiously affiliated organizations participate in religious logic even if their primary missions are identical with those of parallel secular organizations. If the religious logic in question is homophobic and heterosexist (in the analytic sense that I've described in this book) religiously affiliated institutions are likely to be homophobic and heterosexist even if they exist to provide health care. The notion of integrating different institutional logics used in this way may thus have value beyond denominational sexuality struggles, a point I take up in the next section.

DEMOCRATIC LOGIC, RELIGIOUS LOGIC, AND AMERICAN VIEWS OF HOMOSEXUALITY

> The center of American culture has found ways to affirm the civil rights of gay and lesbian persons while resisting full access of homosexuals to social institutions such as marriage or iconic institutions such as the

> military. Likewise, although United Methodists have declared that homosexuals are persons of "sacred worth," the church has also adopted legislation to prohibit these people of holy value from entering marital covenants or exercising the pastoral office.[11]

With regard to homosexuality, most Americans as well as most UMs keep to what is often called a "middle ground" of "don't gay-bash, don't condone," but which may actually be a large-scale example of different institutional logics at work. Like UMs, Americans more generally may draw on "inclusionist" democratic logic to support LGBT rights. Also like UMs, Americans more generally may base their resistance to homosexuality as a practice on religious logic. This claim is supported by findings from both survey and qualitative research. For example, Wagenaar and Bartos (1977) observed that clergymen who distinguished between what is right from a moral standpoint and what is right from a civil standpoint were the most accepting of homosexuality in the civil sphere. The idea that American views on homosexuality are based on two different institutional logics also explains statements such as one made to Zuckerman (1999: 113) that "there's a civil code and there's a religious code. And in terms of civil code, everyone should have equal rights. There should be no discrimination for any reason. But in terms of the religious code . . . the Bible was meant for all time, the Torah was given for all time [and they condemn homosexuality]." Similarly, Vaid (1995:20), commenting on the fact that Americans "democratically" oppose antigay discrimination even more strongly than they "religiously" oppose homosexuality, quotes an Oregon man who voted against an antigay ballot measure as saying, "I don't think being gay is right. It's immoral. It's against all religious beliefs. I don't agree with gays at all, but I don't think they should be discriminated against." During a national study of "middle-class morality," one man told Wolfe (1998: 280) both that he was "adamantly opposed to homosexuality" as a sin and that he thought heterosexuals needed to "look at [homosexual] people with respect and as human beings." These comments and many others like them support the idea that heterosexual Americans may support lesbian/gay rights without necessarily believing that homosexuality is morally equivalent to heterosexuality.

U.S. poll data further demonstrate both that Americans make a distinction between "homosexuals" and homosexuality and that this distinction makes sense if Americans are drawing on democratic logic in some cases and religious logic in others. Table 9.1 presents selected U.S. poll data on homosexuality-related items from the 1970s through 2007.[12] Agreement with the first five items suggests that the respondent is using democratic logic; the items cover equal rights in terms of job opportunities, inclusion of "homosexuals" in hate crime laws, and willingness to hire "homosexuals" for various kinds of work. Disagreement with the final four items may indicate that the respondent is using religious logic; the first three items focus

on acceptance of homosexuality and the final item addresses acceptance of same-sex marriage.

Of the first four items in the table, the three that were raised in the 1970s received support from at least 50 percent of respondents at that time and support for these items grew consistently through the 2000s. Each item is currently supported by three-quarters or more of respondents. The fourth of these items, which was not raised until the 1990s, was supported by three-quarters of respondents. Only one putatively "democratic logic" question (that of whether "homosexuals" should be hired as clergy) was supported by fewer than half of respondents in the 1970s, and while support for lesbian/gay clergy has clearly grown in the popular mind since then, it hovers at the 50 percent mark. My interpretation of the lower support for this item is that, since religion is involved, at least some respondents are using religious rather than democratic logic in answering. The remaining four items in the table, which address either homosexuality per se or same-sex marriage, all received support from less than 50 percent of respondents initially. Two of these items are still supported by less than 50 percent of respondents, while the other two items are supported by less than three-fifths of respondents. Clearly there is a difference between public response to the first several items in the table and response to the final several items, a difference which I think is best explained by the combined use of democratic and religious logics on the part of many respondents.

Differential symbolization of "homosexuals" and homosexuality may also play a role in the poll numbers. As discussed in Chapter Six, poll items in which "homosexuals" represent or stand for something larger receive lower support than other items specific to LGBT people, as with the military symbolizing patriotism and the pastorate representing God, holiness, moral leadership, and Christianity (rather than simply being jobs or professions in themselves). Similarly, poll items about homosexuality receive less support than items about "homosexuals" as people, likely because of the ick factor, but perhaps also because morality and marriage symbolize deeply valued social goods (order, stability, "traditional" gender relations). The lack of support for same-sex marriage in particular suggests that this is an issue in which some combination of religious logic and symbolization has largely won out over democratic logic and personalization in the public mind thus far.

While the varying levels of support for these poll items may demonstrate that different institutional logics or homophobic symbolization play a role in public attitudes toward homosexuality, the change in levels of support for both "homosexuals" and homosexuality over time is striking. All items for which I have found multiple data points show a steady growth in support, albeit at different rates, with the only obvious dip being in the item on "homosexual" clergy.[13] This growth in support may indicate an increased reliance on democratic logic in thinking about LGBT issues, a decline in symbolization, or any of a number of other possibilities (such as the increasing

number of heterosexuals who know LGBT people); in any case, it bodes well for LGBT people in the civil sphere at least. At the same time, the continued gap between support of poll items focused on LGBT rights and those focused on homosexuality as such is troubling, suggesting as it does how incompletely LGBT people are accepted as sexual beings in society.

Table 9.1 U.S. Poll Data on Homosexuality

Poll Items	*1970s*	*1980s*	*1990s*	*2000s*
"Homosexuals should have equal rights in terms of job opportunities." (percent agreeing)	56%	71%	83%	89%
"If a hate law were enacted in your state, should homosexuals be covered?" (percent answering yes)	—	—	75%	—
"Homosexuals should be hired for salespersons." (percent agreeing)	68%	79%	90%	90%
"Homosexuals should be hired for the Armed Forces." (percent agreeing)	51%	60%	70%	76%
"Homosexuals should be hired for clergy." (percent agreeing)	36%	44%	54%	49%
"Homosexual relations should be legal." (percent agreeing)	43%	47%	50%	59%
"Homosexuality should be considered an acceptable alternative lifestyle." (percent agreeing)	—	34%	50%	57%
"Homosexual relations are morally acceptable." (percent agreeing)	—	—	40%	47%
"Marriages between same-sex couples should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages." (percent agreeing)	—	—	27%	46%

For source information, see chap. 9, n.12.

The remainder of this chapter addresses future possibilities for the UMC inclusion struggle. After considering certain cultural and structural issues that may affect the struggle, I offer some ideas about what inclusionists might do at this point and conclude with a last comment on the stakes of the struggle for both sides.

THE FUTURE OF THE UMC INCLUSION STRUGGLE

Any options that might make sense for inclusionists would need to be considered in the context of several factors that have not yet been mentioned. For example, General Conference 2000 changed the formula for allocating delegates to future General Conferences based on where church membership is growing the most, with the result that delegates are now more likely to be conservative on matters related to homosexuality. More delegates are from the Southeastern and South Central Jurisdictions and from outside the United States, the regions least supportive of homosexuality. A comparison of selected General Conference 2000 and General Conference 2004 homosexuality votes suggests that this conservative strategy has been at least somewhat effective. Of the four relevant items for which I obtained vote outcomes for both years (the incompatibility clause, the ordination prohibition, the holy union prohibition and the equal rights language), three vote outcomes became more conservative from 2000 to 2004.[14] While support for the incompatibility language dropped from 65 percent in 2000 to 61 percent in 2004,[15] support for the ordination prohibition rose slightly, from 70 percent to 72 percent, support for the holy union prohibition rose from 75 percent to 80 percent, and support for the equal rights language declined from 85 percent to 67 percent. This last finding is particularly disturbing from the inclusionist perspective, suggesting as it does that UM willingness to incorporate democratic logic along with religious logic could be waning.

The global church plays an important enough role in this struggle to merit its own consideration. Resistance to LGBT inclusion is strong in African and Asian UMC churches and is likely to remain so. U.S. inclusionists who are primarily concerned with finding safe places to worship will be increasingly able to do so as long as the inclusionist movement focuses on developing reconciling congregations regardless of African and Asian positions on the issue. However, for the denomination as a whole to become substantially more inclusionist, one of two outcomes would have to occur: either liberal U.S. UMs would have to leave the denomination and form their own denomination, or the current structure of the UMC would have to change so that ultraconservative African and Asian UMs were not voting on U.S. United Methodism. Either outcome is plausible, though neither seems highly likely at this time. Some inclusionists have spoken of forming a breakaway denomination, though others have chosen to focus on

a "church within a church" movement of progressive UMs.[16] Moreover, an inclusionist recently told me that structural changes in the near future could result in the United States church holding its own General Conference without African or Asian delegates. In such a case conservatives might be less successful in holding the line on homosexuality. International delegates at General Conference appear to vote against inclusion, so the loss of international delegations could theoretically move the U.S. church toward a greater balance of inclusionists and those opposed to full LGBT inclusion. Moreover, U.S. conservatives might not have quite the same leverage in their appeals to support the international church by keeping the prohibitions in place.

A change in denominational support of homosexuality probably also requires certain large-scale cultural changes. The institutional contradictions embraced by the church are also embraced by the wider culture. This bodes badly for the inclusionists in the short term, but may signal a change in the longer term if cultural liberalization eventually moves the denomination to a place that internal politics cannot reach alone. As one moderate delegate told me, "the church will track the culture on the issue of the place of gay people in the church pretty much like it tracked the culture on divorce, with a more difficult time of doing it." Wood (2000: 111) provides tentative support for this claim with his finding that, in 1994, only 19 percent of UMs in general (not just delegates) said that same-sex sexual relations are wrong only sometimes or are not wrong at all. In 1996 and 1998 in comparison, this number jumped to 39 percent, which is consistent with the change in polling data described in this chapter.

Such societal cultural changes will only impact the UMC if the church does in fact "track the culture" on the issue of homosexuality. Cultural arguments about the tightly woven interconnection between United Methodism and Americanism suggest that such cultural tracking is likely to occur; careful attention to institutional analyses suggests greater complexity. If religious logic for conservatives, evangelicals and moderates necessarily involves separation from worldliness,[17] they will tend to keep at least a certain amount of cultural distance between themselves and the broader American response to homosexuality, even if they move toward liberalization along with the rest of the country more generally. McConkey (2001: 171–172) has put this well:

> Evangelicals now exhibit greater tolerance toward homosexuality than they did a decade ago, but they are still significantly less tolerant than the rest of society, which has also further increased its acceptance of homosexuality. Thus, the evangelical moral code is not set in stone due to some ultimate understanding of moral truth. Rather it is, to a large degree, set by the moral tone of the larger society. As long as evangelical morality toward homosexuality is sufficiently distinctive from the larger society, the specific [position is] free to shift.[18]

Whether McConkey or the moderate delegate quoted above is more accurate, both seem to me to be correct in their assessments of how, and how slowly, change on this issue will occur. Moreover, either answer suggests that as long as those opposed to full LGBT inclusion have the majority vote at General Conference, increasing inclusion will take place primarily or only at the congregational level.

PRESBYTERIAN AND LUTHERAN "LOCAL OPTIONS" AND "WIGGLE ROOM:" A POSSIBILITY FOR THE UMC?

Both the PCUSA and the ELCA have recently created a small amount of "wiggle room" in their ordination and holy union policies that maintain the symbolic denominational rejection of homosexuality while allowing selected LGBT individuals to be pastors and have their same-sex relationships blessed. This "wiggle room," and its benefits and drawbacks, are worth some consideration in light of the UMC situation.[19] In 2006, the PCUSA General Assembly kept the denominational ordination prohibition in place but made room for a local option. An ordaining body "may decide in a particular case that a person's departure from a standard is not a departure from essentials, but a body that makes that decision may not determine that the standard is invalid or inapplicable." The language of the proposal permits the ordination of lesbian and gay seminarians in cases where the district ordaining bodies are inclusionist, but does not allow ordaining bodies to challenge the prohibition on LGBT clergy in general. In 2007, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted to retain their prohibition of LGBT clergy while encouraging bishops not to "discipline" (remove from their positions) LGBT clergy already serving churches. While the decision to strip such a clergy member from the church roster remains at the bishop's discretion, and while some bishops will undoubtedly continue to discipline LGBT clergy, the new ruling allows sympathetic bishops to support the presence of LGBT clergy in specific congregations.

The PCUSA and the ELCA have also reached stances on holy unions that allow such ceremonies to take place quietly within the church without either formal denominational approval or a substantial threat of denominational sanctions. In 2000 the Presbyterian Judicial Council determined that Presbyterian ministers could perform holy union services as long as they were not understood to be "marriages." In 2005 the ELCA chose not to approve an official ceremony of the church "for the blessing of a homosexual relationship." The denomination did, however, state that it "express[es] trust in and will continue dialogue with those pastors and congregations who are in ministry with gay and lesbian persons and [will] affirm their desire to explore the best ways to provide pastoral care for all to whom they minister."

These local options blend different institutional logics, and as such they represent a solution clearly grounded in the perspective of the Protestant

middle. Maintaining homosexuality-related prohibitions allows the middle to affirm its religious commitment to heterosexuality; providing contexts in which LGBT people can serve as pastors and have their relationships blessed in church allows the middle to affirm its "democratic" commitment to the inclusion and well-being of all people, even if only in limited circumstances. Public, formal, denomination-wide symbolization of homosexuality coexists with private, pragmatic, limited desymbolization of "homosexuals" in situations reminiscent of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

Compared to the current situation in the United Methodist Church, these Presbyterian and Lutheran local options represent good news. Inclusionist Presbyteries can ordain LGBT seminarians, and inclusionist Lutheran bishops can allow LGBT pastors to continue serving their congregations. Presbyterian and Lutheran same-sex couples can be blessed in holy union as long as they are in congregations with inclusionist pastors and, in the Presbyterian case, as long as the term "marriage" is not used publicly. While these local options only apply to a limited number of LGBT people in certain areas and congregations, they represent real opportunities for those people.

At the same time, local options are troubling for inclusionists in important ways. They do, after all, maintain the symbolic boundaries of homophobia and heterosexism that devalue LGBT people, and they will deny access to the many LGBT Protestants in parts of the country (or congregations) that are not inclusionist. Moreover, since local options represent a solution of the middle, they mitigate against the possibility that further inclusion will be institutionalized in the near future. Recall the democratic structures of the UMC that work against UM inclusionists by making their protests look more unreasonable. Presbyterian and Lutheran local options may make inclusionists in those denominations look similarly unreasonable if they continue to demand complete removal of the ordination prohibitions and formal approval of the blessing of holy unions.

Local options of the sort described here serve a function somewhat like that of "gay ghettos." LGBT people suffer less when gay ghettos are available, but it would be even better to live in a society in which the need for gay ghettos was a thing of the past. Civil unions may be an even better analogy. U.S. LGBT people in same-sex relationships can only be married in Massachusetts, but several other states permit civil unions as of this writing (Vermont, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire). Civil unions can provide extensive state-level benefits equivalent to marriage, and as such are arguably better than the lack of options for same-sex partners that currently exists in most states. At the same time, civil unions are not equivalent to marriage, either in terms of social status or access to federal benefits, and they are not recognized outside the states in which they occur. Both gay ghettos and civil unions demonstrate how public devaluation and private opportunities work together, complicating the lives and political goals of LGBT people.

Both denominational structure and inclusionist inclinations make a local option highly unlikely for the UMC in the short term. Over the course of the inclusion struggle, the denomination has signaled through General Conference votes and Judicial Council decisions that an inclusionist local option is not acceptable. Moreover, most inclusionists with whom I have spoken reject such an option as fostering continued injustice. In the longer term, a local option may become somewhat more feasible if the denomination perceives (as the Presbyterians and Lutherans appear to have) a real risk of the denomination splitting. Put differently, at this point in time the UM middle can side fairly comfortably with the conservatives and evangelicals, knowing that a schism is not imminent. If either side made real moves toward dividing the church, however, the UM middle might do as the Presbyterian and Lutheran middles have done and embrace a compromise that would not please either the conservatives or the inclusionists, but that would maintain the unity of the church. At that point, inclusionists would have to decide how to respond; likely, some would take advantage of the new opportunities available while most would protest the problematic nature of the church's new stance.

INCLUSIONIST OPTIONS

If the analytic perspectives addressed in this book accurately describe the nature of the inclusion struggle, they raise difficult questions of where inclusionists might go from here. Inclusionists can continue to argue that homophobia and heterosexism are similar to racism, and they can continue to articulate their concerns about social closure, but such approaches mark them as political, enhancing their problematic status. Inclusionists can also continue to fight the UM culture war, but the power of religious logic and the ensconced nature of religious orthodoxy (in Hunter's sense) combine to keep inclusionists in the minority in at least the UMC's particular version of the culture war. The neo-institutionalist analysis suggests a different strategy. Inclusionists could work to demonstrate to the institution that they pose no threat to it, that they are not intent upon tearing down UM boundaries, and that they are simply loyalists and not "the loyal opposition."

Loyalist Inclusionists

> I don't think [LGBT UMs] should stand on the corner and say I'm an avowed gay homosexual and wave the flag, because I think in a lot of people's thinking that closes a lot of doors. I know within my own church we have several people who I know are gay. They're in leadership roles. They don't go around carrying that chip on their shoulder. (A conservative delegate)

A number of moderate delegates who voted not to change the *Discipline* nonetheless told me that, as one put it, "I owe it to the church to at least continue to converse, to learn, to talk, in the hopes that somewhere there's a compromise out there which may now just be a flickering candle on some horizon but maybe can become a reality." It is exactly this propensity for compromise if it could be handled appropriately (from an institutional perspective) that differentiates moderates from conservatives and evangelicals. If the inclusionists were able to change the terms of the struggle, they might become more sympathetic figures in moderates' eyes, and thus more able over time to convince moderates of the reasonableness of their position.

Inclusionists are only likely to convince moderates of their reasonableness, however, if they act more reasonably (from an institutional perspective). One way to do this would be for inclusionists to do everything in their power to develop strategies that did not rely on democratic logic.[20] Strategically I imagine this would mean desymbolizing themselves to the best of their ability and demonstrating their respect for both the boundaries and the processes of the church. Witnessing and protesting is valuable in salvaging dignity where it is being systematically demolished but it does not appear to be aiding the inclusionists' efforts, and indeed may be hindering some of those efforts. For example, several moderates and conservatives told me that the actions (and trials) of pastors who carried out public holy unions between 1996 and 2000 mobilized conservatives at least as much as they did inclusionists. Witnessing and protesting firmly link the idea of full LGBT participation in the life of the church with a logic that "the church," rightly or wrongly, sees as different from its own. If politics and church are conceived of as opposites, as both Moon's (2000, 2004) and my research suggest, inclusionists should strongly consider distancing themselves from politics as much as possible (admittedly an extremely difficult task) and identifying visibly with spiritual transcendence in order to be redefined by others as "belonging" (Moon 2004: 179).[21] Rights and justice arguments would need to be let go to the greatest extent possible; with LGBT people already politicized, any political action on behalf of inclusion has the unintended effect of amplifying LGBT difference from normal, reasonable United Methodism in the same way that a fun house mirror simultaneously magnifies and distorts the image of the person in front of the mirror.[22]

I understand how jarring and how deeply disturbing this suggestion will seem to others, since I find it jarring and deeply disturbing myself. That I could appear to accuse deeply devoted UM inclusionists of being insufficiently loyal may seem like the very depth of insensitivity and insult, especially given that if the inclusionists were anything other than completely loyal they would simply leave the denomination and go elsewhere. The problem is not that the inclusionists are insufficiently loyal but that their analysis and strategies make it impossible for them to convince enough other UMs that they are sufficiently loyal. The heart of inclusionist difficulty is not activism but homophobia, heterosexism and social closure;

the political identity of LGBT UMs follows from the inequality they face. At the same time, one of the burdens of any kind of inequality is that it forces the devalued and disenfranchised to take primary responsibility for addressing their situation. Ceasing to "wave the [homosexual] flag" and taking up the loyalist banner is one way inclusionists might address their situation.

Removing the rainbow pins and passing on the protests need not mean completely eschewing "politics." As noted throughout the book, the conservative caucuses are political. The inclusionists could restrict themselves to the kind of political actions currently undertaken by the conservative caucuses, and could bring immense energy and creativity to such actions. In fact, the inclusionists already do this work. They get inclusionist delegates elected and they provide support for those delegates at General Conference. The difference is that they also don their "gay apparel" and carry out protests. It might be that confining their political activism to what the "other side" does would cut into the moral alchemy of inclusionist politicization while still allowing for a modicum of political activism defined by others as more acceptable.[23]

Waving the loyalist banner instead of the LGBT flag is not without profound limits as a strategy, however. First, inclusionists are highly unlikely to actually take up such a strategy; democratic logic involves a consciousness and not merely a set of behavioral choices, and the inclusionist consciousness will likely find the loyalist banner approach untenable. At least as important, eschewing politics will not change the reality of inequality in the church, and therefore is not a meaningful strategy for change. As Moon (2004: 125) has observed, "When [congregation] members sought to distance themselves from ["politics"], they often had the effect of simply defining themselves as apolitical without disrupting the very political social divisions and hierarchies that structured their congregations." Given these limits, the only reason to refrain from witnessing (both as General Conference approaches and while it is taking place) and from protesting is that such an approach at this point in the struggle would constitute trying something different that could theoretically turn out to be a valuable approach. There is no compelling evidence that such a choice would, either quickly or eventually, change the inequality structure, and it would certainly rob inclusionists of certain important spiritual, psychological, and community-building benefits that they now receive. It might nonetheless constitute an act of faith even if simply as an acknowledgment that there are always multiple options available in the face of inequality.

Another potential change of strategy for the inclusionists would involve becoming "legislative loyalists" while intensifying their congregational challenge to inequality. In this case, inclusionists would end their witnessing and protesting at General Conference but would take steps locally to move their agenda forward.

WORKING FOR CHANGE AT THE CONGREGATIONAL LEVEL

One moderate told me that "stateways don't change folkways." Behind this sociological jargon is the idea that inclusionists who want to keep up the good fight in the most strategically useful way should stop working at the legislative level (General Conference) and focus instead on local churches and grassroots networks. I agree with this point wholeheartedly. Inclusionists could profit by directing their energy overwhelmingly toward making individual congregations welcoming and empowering for LGBT UMs. As the experience of the last 30 years suggests, it is possible to have inclusionist congregations even with antigay rules on the books. Moreover, a fair amount of research supports this strategy. Warner (1995: 94) notes the conclusion of many gay Christian activists that the struggle for LGBT recognition must move to the congregational level; Comstock's (1996:77) findings indicate that "local congregations can resist and neutralize somewhat denominational policy."[24] Similarly, Becker (1997: 141–142) observes that at the congregational level, the "absolutizing" nature of religion described by Friedland and Alford (1991) and Hunter (1991) is somewhat nullified in congregations, where "conflict generally means a complicated balancing of the equally compelling imperatives to do what is right and what is caring." Ellingson et al. (2001: 4) claim that "local norms about sexual behavior and identity, and congregational identities and histories, are usually more salient [with regard to sexuality issues] than polity, official teaching, or denominational affiliation." Cadge, Day, and Wildeman (2007: 256) conclude, after studying ELCA congregational responses to homosexuality, that "conflicts over homosexuality may be more national (denominational) than local (congregational), even though [congregational] differences of opinion are evident."

For inclusionists who agree that legislative challenges are effectively blocked for now, but who still want to engage in acts of conscience, perhaps subversive practices at the local level can be a compromise of sorts. This suggestion comes from a surprising source: James Wall, former editor of *Christianity Today* and (according to Heidinger 1997) self-identified evangelical in 1968. At that time, Wall played a role in the development of Good News. More recently, however, Wall has made public inclusionist statements. In a *Christian Century* editorial following General Conference 2000, Wall (2000) called the prohibition of holy unions "outrageous" and ended the piece with his hope that "God will find a way to remind us to embrace all of his children, regardless of their sexual orientation." Wall's shift over these roughly 30 years should provide at least a touch of reassurance to inclusionists that evangelicals can change their perspective on this issue, but the rest of the editorial is even more helpful. Specifically, Wall suggests that holy unions be celebrated in ways that hold to the letter of the law but not its spirit. His example is a ceremony performed by a layperson

in which the pastor is a witness or is involved in a way that could not be construed by anyone as "officiating." Such a ceremony would, of course, take place away from the church but it is easy to imagine an extension of Wall's suggestion in which the holy union space is blessed as well. Such a ceremony would also presumably be kept private and not, for example, reported to the pastor's supervisor. While those committed to political action will find this unsatisfying or worse, it does meet the goal of the couple in question, provided that this goal is to have their loving relationship blessed by those with whom the church is associated, however indirectly. Wood (2000: 132–133), writing before Wall's article appeared, argues that the quiet celebration of same-sex commitments in non-church settings is likely to become more common and that a slow movement toward pastoral discretion in carrying out holy unions (a local option) will develop over time. Whether or not he is right about the second point, Wood's first point seems entirely plausible.

Of course, subversion is not without its own problems; as a type of local option, it won't change conservative or evangelical attitudes and as an unapproved type, it is likely to dismay moderates. Subversion will in fact further confirm evangelical, moderate and conservative views of inclusionists as those who threaten the boundaries and integrity of the church once word of the subversion becomes public.

Evangelism represents another local strategy. It's no surprise why the fastest-growing sectors of United Methodism are the most conservative: evangelicals have been doing the most evangelizing, and the gospel they are spreading is not about the full participation of LGBT people in the life of the church. One inclusionist told me that inclusionists "are victims of our own values. We didn't put very high priority on expansion or spreading the gospel in terms of actual evangelism." If inclusionists want to change the way the United Methodist Church views homosexuality, one key strategy would be to engage in major evangelizing projects among heterosexual progressives and LGBT people, whether churched or unchurched; perhaps such projects are already underway. The denomination's inclusionist element is not going to grow proportionally to the denomination as a whole without bringing in more inclusionists from outside the church. In this sense, inclusionists would have to take up a priority of the evangelicals; ironically, doing so would not just spread the gospel and aid in denominational growth but would ultimately provide support for the Christian social justice values that inclusionists value so deeply.

There are also congregational strategies that do not appear to be political but that can in fact effect change. Wood (2000: 83–84) argues that minds are changed about homosexuality through the enlarging of personal circles; this argument is supported by research showing that heterosexual people who know LGBT people are more likely to be accepting on a number of counts (e.g., Yang 1999: 18–20). Perhaps the most important thing LGBT UMs can do as part of the process of making local congregations

welcoming is to simply be present and engaged in church life while being as open, yet relaxed, as possible about their sexuality. Recall the argument of a conservative delegate that LGBT UMs should avoid "stand[ing] on the corner," saying they are "avowed gay homosexual[s]" and "wav[ing] the flag" because such actions generate negative responses. He mentions gay members of his congregation being in leadership positions, and he appears not to disapprove of these members holding such positions. Their homosexuality is not a master status for this delegate however he may feel about homosexuality in general, because they don't make anything of their homosexuality; as he puts it, "they don't go around carrying that chip on their shoulder." The delegate's comment suggests in fact that the presence of "non-political" gay members in his congregation has allowed him to decouple homosexuality from politics, at least locally.

An extension of the above claim is relevant here. LGBT UMs already demonstrate, both in word and action, that they are as tired of this struggle as the evangelicals are, and that their local church priorities (worship, Sunday school, evangelism) are those of normal, reasonable UMs, precisely because they are normal, reasonable UMs. While many LGBT UMs may not think of these comments and actions as political strategies, they serve a political (and inclusionist) purpose. The more the average heterosexual UM in the pew sees that the average LGBT UM has "normal" UM feelings about and commitments to the church, the more likely the heterosexual UM is to move past the ick factor and treat the LGBT UM "reasonably," as a brother or sister in Christ.[25]

None of these congregational strategies guarantee large-scale change any time soon, but they may provide a measure of relief for individual LGBT UMs. Moreover, depending on how other cultural and structural factors play out, change at the congregational level could eventually inform denomination-wide change to some degree.

OTHER STRATEGIES: CONTINUE TO PROTEST

For many inclusionists, adopting any of these suggestions simply may not be possible. For others, such adoption may not be desired; few people who see the world largely or primarily through a "conflict analysis" lens are convinced that there is any reason to view the world differently, and particularly for those inclusionists who have been activists for decades, the ideas presented here might seem untutored and impertinent. Most inclusionists with whom I have already shared these suggestions are unconvinced that witnessing and protesting hurt their cause, though they are willing to consider the possibility. In one interesting exchange, a (heterosexual) 1960s civil rights activist proposed that inclusionists should keep protesting but should dress formally to signal their respect for the denomination, a strategy adopted by early civil rights movement activists and homophile activists before

Stonewall. Another (heterosexual) inclusionist retorted that such a strategy might serve to push LGBT UMs back in the closet. With or without their garb, inclusionists are likely to keep witnessing and protesting. If they do, I certainly wish them well. I would love nothing more than for my analysis to be incorrect and my suggestions unnecessary.

OTHER STRATEGIES: LEAVE THE DENOMINATION

Inclusionist UMs could leave the UMC for more inclusionist denominations (the United Church of Christ, the Metropolitan Community Churches, or the Unitarian Universalist Association, among others); alternately they could form a new, fully inclusive Methodist denomination. Neither option seems likely at this time. Inclusionists frequently told me how deep their Methodist identity went. LGBT UMs described both their sexual and religious identities as core identities. Individual inclusionists are undoubtedly leaving the UMC for other religious homes, but a mass exodus would imply that inclusionists have admitted defeat, which is clearly not the case. Nor have I seen any evidence that inclusionists are planning to leave the denomination *en masse* to form a new one; those who I have met, or whose writings I have read, are still far too committed to changing the institution they love.

WHAT IS AT STAKE?

Without arguing that every form of Christianity is inherently homophobic and heterosexist, I have tried to draw attention in this book to the ways that mainline Protestantism partakes deeply of homophobia and heterosexism in a complicated set of cultural, structural, and institutional processes. If mainline Protestantism routinely reproduces sexuality-based inequality while simultaneously serving as a core meaning system for a substantial part of the United States, there are only two ways in which homophobia and heterosexism will be successfully exorcised from American society. The first and less likely possibility is that democratic logic will square off with mainline Protestant religious logic in the public sphere and will ultimately win. The increasing willingness of Christians to grant LGBT people civil rights suggests that such a contest is in fact taking place and that democratic logic is holding its own in some contexts. As Epstein[26] observes, however, "[f]reedom from discrimination [against] homosexual *persons* is an insufficient goal, if homosexuality as a *practice* retains its inferior status." While other preconditions are undoubtedly also necessary, homophobia and heterosexism cannot be put to rest fully and completely in America until Christianity ceases to condemn "homosexuality as a practice," both culturally and institutionally. The UM case both supports this claim and

demonstrates how far the church and the country still have to go in relinquishing such condemnation.

There may yet be a day when those on all sides of the UMC inclusion struggle beat their swords into plowshares, but that day is not likely to come soon. The next General Conference will take place in 2008 and barring an unexpected change before then the inclusion struggle will come to the fore once again. It's no wonder that conservative, evangelical and moderate United Methodists hold on as they do. Where else but in their beloved denomination can it still be said that it's not about civil rights, it's about holiness? It's also no wonder that the inclusionists struggle on as they do. Where else but in their beloved denomination would unconditional welcome of them as LGBT people be so nourishing for their Christian souls? For the inclusionists, the washing away of this particular boundary would be nothing less than God's grace at work, just as Jesus Christ came tearing down walls in the name of the Kingdom. For other UMs, the washing away of this particular boundary would let the world into the church until the two were no longer distinct. With stakes such as these, homosexuality in the United Methodist Church is sure to remain a field of contention where deeply invested groups battle for the ascendancy of their values and visions.

Appendix 1

Homosexuality-Related General Conference Votes, 1972–2004

Appendix 1 Homosexuality-Related General Conference Votes, 1972–2004

Item	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004
Incompatibility language	Count not recorded	Count not recorded	729–225 (76%)	Count not recorded	621–344 (64%)	710–238 (75%)	577–378 (60%)	628–337 (65%)	579–376 (61%)
Funding prohibition	—*	Count not recorded	Count not recorded	Count not recorded	634–286 (69%)	Vote not found	659–230 (74%)	630–269 (70%)	**
Ordination prohibition	—	—	—	568–494 (58%)	676–293 (70%)	696–192 (78%)	**	650–285 (70%)	674–262 (72%)
Holy union prohibition	—	—	—	—	—	—	553–321 (63%)	670–222*** (75%)	732–183 (80%)
Equal rights paragraph	—	—	—	—	—	739–210 (78%)	736–174 (81%)	723–130 (85%)	630–311 (67%)
Equal access to military****	—	—	—	—	—	—	617–209 (75%)	723–130 (85%)	Vote not found

Source: United Methodist Church Archives

* Dashes indicate General Conferences during years prior to the General Conference at which this item was first introduced.

** These votes were handled differently and thus cannot be analyzed in the context of the rest of the table.

*** This vote brought the holy union prohibition into the legally binding part of the *Discipline*.

**** This language is in the *Book of Resolutions*, not the *Book of Discipline*.

Appendix 2

Sample General Conference Petitions on Homosexuality

Appendix 2 Sample General Conference Petitions on Homosexuality

Petition #	*Page*	*This Petition, if Adopted, Would:*	*Pro-LGBT/ Anti-LGBT*
30083	484	Retain incompatibility language	Anti
31604	479–80	Remove incompatibility language	Pro
30052	484	Retain holy union prohibition	Anti
31633	481	Remove holy union prohibition	Pro
30208	523	Retain prohibition on lesbian/gay clergy	Anti
30902	521	Remove prohibition on lesbian/gay clergy	Pro
30121	436	Retain funding prohibition	Anti
30149	436	Remove funding prohibition	Pro
31374	303	Establish UMC transforming ministries office	Secondary negative
31745	101	Oppose discrimination	Secondary positive
30603	490	Affirm abstinence outside of marriage	Secondary negative
31075	493	Commit to prayer and conferencing on the issue	Secondary positive (some interpretations)

Source: United Methodist Church Commission on General Conference 2000.

Appendix 3

Comparison of Views on Homosexuality within the Church

Appendix 3 Comparison of Views on Homosexuality within the Church

	Transforming View	*Reconciling View*
Homosexuality	An immoral behavioral choice or a deep-seated social, psychological and/or spiritual deficit in need of cure or transformation. Is an unnatural condition and never part of God's ultimate will no matter how deeply entrenched.	A given or developed orientation or affectional preference, not always expressed behaviorally but part of one's natural being, celebrated as a gift not a curse. Morality to be judged by the same standards as heterosexual relations.
Analogous to . . .	Alcoholism: a complex physical, socio-psycho-spiritual illness or disorder (perhaps with genetic influence) to be cured (or at least controlled) through strength from Higher Power. Compassion does not equal acceptance.	Left-handedness: a minority but natural way some people happen to be. Efforts to change someone may alter behavior but at a price of mental anguish and unnecessary shame. Forcing change is cruel.
The sin is…	Homosexual behavior and desire; acceptance of this condition as ever being compatible with God's will; resultant social degradation.	Unjust discrimination, bearing false witness, perpetuation of cruel myths and stereotypes about gay people; heterosexist self- righteousness and judgment.
The church's healing mission is . . .	To lovingly help change homosexuals into heterosexuals or bring them to a life of non-sexual expression (celibacy) while being nurtured by a spiritual community. Love the homosexual sinner, hate the sin.	To help all persons to be reconciled to God, self, and one another, to rid persons and systems of hatred, discrimination and personal/corporate shame and ignorance. Love the homophobic sinner, hate the sin.
The Bible teaches…	Heterosexuality is God's universal design from creation. Lev. 18:22, 20:13; Gen. 19:1–29; 1 Cor. 6:9–11; 1 Tim. 1:10; Rom. 14 and other passages all clearly condemn homosexuality as wrong. Nowhere are homosexual relationships presented in an acceptable light. Other biblical principles and themes, including heterosexual procreation, likewise support the holiness and normalcy of opposite-sex affection. Change is possible through the indwelling of Christ	Little or nothing about homosexual orientation, only certain homosexual abuses such as rape, temple prostitution, inhospitality, and idolatry. Approximately 300 texts condemn particular heterosexual behavior but that does not mean heterosexuality is evil. Other principles including Jesus' love ethic and his example of including and respecting outcasts, minorities and religiously persecuted folks of his day, confirm the need to look at the historical and social context. To use

(continued)

Appendix 3 Comparison of Views on Homosexuality within the Church *(continued)*

	Transforming View	*Reconciling View*
	and the power of the Holy Spirit. God sorts the "wheat from the chaff," and "not all who call me Lord will enter the Kingdom of Heaven." Scriptural authority is as relevant today as ever, and no amount of rationalization or humanist influence can change God's Holy Word. Jesus died for all but repentance is necessary.	the Bible to justify diminishment of gay persons is akin to efforts to control, enslave, or persecute persons based on race, gender or social class in the name of God, Jesus or biblical authority.

Source: Vrieze 1999. From *A Reconciling Cookbook: Recipes for an Inclusive Church*. Copyright 1999 by the Reconciling Congregation Program. Used by permission.

Notes

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

1. I use the term "UM" as shorthand for United Methodist, except for a few places where the term "Methodist" is more appropriate. These include the historical discussion in Chapter Two, material in other chapters that addresses the history of Methodism, and any published or spoken direct quotes that refer to "Methodists," "Methodist" or "Methodism" without the term "United."
2. Since those UMs who support the homosexuality-related restrictions refer to themselves as conservatives in some cases and evangelicals in others, I use both terms to describe them.
3. I use the term "inclusionists" as shorthand for those LGBT United Methodists and their allies who seek to remove all "exclusionary" language from the *Book of Discipline*.
4. Use of the term "LGBT" suggests that lesbians, gay men, bisexual people and transgendered people all play a substantial role in the UMC inclusion struggle. In fact, almost all of the non-heterosexual inclusionists I met or whose writings I read are gay men or lesbians. I use "LGBT" partly to acknowledge the few bisexual and transgendered inclusionists I encountered, and partly in the spirit of inclusion more generally.
5. General Conference is held every four years.
6. Lyles 2000: 591.
7. See Coyner 1998 on the "Methodist middle."
8. See Hartman 1996: ix; Hartford Institute for Religion Research 2000; Rutt 1998: 60.
9. See Carey 1995: ix, xii; Glock 1993; Swidler 1993.
10. See Bell 1999.
11. See Fisher et al. 1994.
12. Poll data are presented and analyzed more fully in Chapter Nine.
13. While religions other than Christianity have responded to homosexuality in a variety of ways, it is notable how often religious institutions have been at least somewhat condemnatory. The analysis presented in this book may be applicable to other religious traditions to some degree, but great care should be taken to ensure that the specifics of each religious tradition are adequately addressed.
14. While evangelical and conservative United Methodists don't particularly seek to be unkind, they do intend to reproduce what I call "heterosexism." They simply do not see heterosexism as harmful; rather, they see it as the social enactment of God's clear preference for heterosexuality. I am grateful to Gail Murphy-Geiss for reminding me of this point.

15. See Sample and DeLong 2000.
16. A number of researchers have studied conflicts over homosexuality in other Christian denominations as well as the experience of being an LGBT person of faith in various religions. While this literature is not reviewed separately here, I draw on it where relevant throughout the book in order to demonstrate its connections to my case.
17. In a similar but more recent example, Stroud (n.d.) studied the UMC conflict through a family systems theory lens. In addition to a psychological analysis of the UMC as a whole, her website provides substantial and valuable information about the experiences of LGBT UMs who have chosen to stay in the denomination thus far.
18. This selective reporting should not be taken to mean that conservatives or moderate delegates were not angry or unhappy at times, only that the emotions of the inclusionists are particularly instructive for the analysis at hand.
19. The material in this paragraph is taken from Hunter 1991: 42–45 and 122–123.
20. Transphobia exists as its own phenomenon and plays a key role in the challenges faced by transgendered people. I do not cover transphobia or the role of strict gender boundaries in limiting transgendered people's lives in this book, but the commitment of UM conservatives to what they term "traditional gender roles" suggests that such an analysis would be valuable.
21. As discussed in Chapter Six, conservatives and evangelicals might not reject the term "heterosexist" if it were used descriptively to acknowledge their belief that heterosexuality is normative.
22. In fact, it would be fair to say that the inclusionists' righteous anger is driven by what they understand as the immorality of exclusion. I am grateful to Phoebe Lostroh for reminding me of this point.
23. During General Conference 2000, for example, a moderate told me that the moderates were trying to find the balance between genuine compassion and remaining true to Scripture. He said he did not like to be pushed, and others felt the same way; they perceived that the inclusionist movement was pushing them.
24. The material in this paragraph is taken from Friedland and Alford 1991: 232, 248–249 and 256.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. This discussion draws from the following sources: Allen 1986; *Book of Discipline* 2000; Campbell 1999; Corn 1998; Finke and Stark 1992; Frank 1997; Johnstone 1992; Koehler 1998; McAnally 2001; Schmidt 1988; Stokes 1998; Tuell 1997; Turner 1996; United Methodist News Service 2000a; Wallace 1988; Yrigoyen 1988; and Yrigoyen 1992. In the interests of space, further discussion of several related components of church history (the slavery schism, mid-20th century racial segregation, denominational disagreements about the ordination of women) has been omitted.
2. Wallace 1988: 526.
3. Cited in Wogaman 1995: 16–17; emphasis in original.
4. Corn 1998: 296.
5. Yrigoyen 1988: 541.
6. *Book of Discipline* 2000: 48. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.

7. Matthew 5:48.
8. *Book of Discipline* 2000: 47. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
9. Wesley remained an Anglican priest until his death.
10. Frank 1997: 60.
11. Campbell 1999: 6.
12. Finke and Stark 1992: 106–107.
13. The legacy of the circuit rider remains in the current rule that pastors are to be reassigned to new churches every few years. In situations where there is a particularly poor fit between pastor and congregation, the reassignment may occur within a year or so; at the other end of the spectrum, some pastors receive special dispensation to stay at a given congregation for many years. In most cases, the average seems to be four to seven years per church.
14. Chaves 1997: 17.
15. The Evangelical United Brethren Church is not discussed here due to its having been smaller than The Methodist Church, and having played a correspondingly less significant cultural role in the new denomination. Historically, the Brethren had worked among America's German-speaking population and the Methodists among the English-speaking population; otherwise the two denominations were virtually identical on piety, evangelism, and doctrine. Indeed, they had been referred to as the "English Methodists" and the "German Methodists" during colonial times.
16. The below is taken from Koehler 1998; United Methodist Church 2001; United Methodist Church 2007; United Methodist News Service 2000a; United Methodist News Service 2000b; and United Methodist News Service 2001.
17. United Methodist News Service 2001.
18. Wood 2000: 88. Newman and Halvorson (2000: 79) note that between 1952 and 1990, Methodists came to occupy 2,966 of the 48-state total of 3,073 counties. Only in the West did Methodists occupy fewer than 97 percent of counties.
19. All remaining quotes in this paragraph are from Roof and McKinney 1987: 87–88.
20. Key sources for this section of the chapter, beyond those cited directly, include Adam 1987; Altman 1982; Armstrong 2002; Bronski 1998; D'Emilio 1992; D'Emilio 1998; D'Emilio and Freedman 1997; Epstein 1987; Epstein 1999; Escoffier 1985; Licata 1981; Marotta 1981; Melton 1991; Nardi and Schneider 1998; Seidman 1993; Seidman 1996; Seidman 1999; and Weeks 1985.
21. Blumenfeld and Raymond 1993: 241–242.
22. Adam 1987: 62. The term "homophile" was used from the 1950s well into the 1960s to direct attention away from the sexual nature of homosexuality while pointing to the role of affection and love. This was a strategic way to enhance the sympathy and support of heterosexuals who might be uncomfortable with or opposed to homosexual practice, but who did not support discrimination.
23. Kinsey, Pomeroy and Martin 1948; Kinsey et al. 1953.
24. Kinsey's focus on behavior rather than identity appears not to have convinced self-identified lesbians and gay men to give up their sexual identities; other components of LGBT history likely explain this fact.
25. Epstein 1999: 36.
26. Adam 1987: 71.
27. Smith 1991: 61–2, 65; see also McAdam 1982.

28. Altman 1973; Jay and Young 1972.
29. D'Emilio 1998: 238.
30. Altman 1982: viii.
31. Key sources for this section of the chapter, beyond those cited directly, include Bloom 1997; Bowman and Floyd 2000; Clark, Brown and Hochstein 1989; de la Huerta 1999; Denman 1990; Furnish 1995; Hazel 2000; Heidinger 1997; Irle 1979; Kiely 2000a; Lyles 2000; McAnally 1998; Perkins n.d.; Purdue 1998; Robinson 1999a; Robinson 1999b; Rowe 1992a; Rowe 1992b; Tanton 1998; Tanton 1999; Toulouse 2000; United Methodist Church General Council on Ministries 1992; United Methodist News Service 1998; United Methodist News Service 2001; and Wood 2000. See Appendix One for a table showing General Conference vote counts on homosexuality-related issues from 1972 through 2004.
32. The Social Principles, which are published in both the *Book of Discipline* and the *Book of Resolutions*, are not considered legally binding by the denomination. They are a "prayerful and thoughtful effort on the part of the General Conference to speak to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation as historically demonstrated in United Methodist traditions" (United Methodist News Service 2001).
33. "Ministry Agency Bars Homosexuals; Gay Caucus Organized" 1975.
34. One of the most persuasive arguments on the plenary floor seems to have been that "we will lose members to the Southern Baptist Church" (Dunlap 2000: 71).
35. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
36. All quotes in this paragraph are from The Forum for Scriptural Christianity 2000a.
37. *Book of Discipline* 2000: 453. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
38. Material in this paragraph is taken from Clark 1979 and Warner 1995: 93. Affirmation's name has since been expanded to include "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered concerns."
39. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
40. Institute on Religion and Democracy n.d.
41. *Book of Discipline* 2000: 184. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
42. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
43. See Denman 1990 for a full account.
44. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
45. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
46. The Forum for Scriptural Christianity 1995.
47. All quotes in this paragraph are taken from Confessing Movement 2002.

48. Toulouse 2000: 32.
49. Wood 2000: 18.
50. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
51. The text is now included under the heading of "unauthorized conduct" for a pastor (Book of Discipline 2000: 220). From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
52. *Book of Resolutions* 2000: 160. From the *Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
53. The phrase "in all things charity" appears to have been based on a longer phrase adopted by Wesley: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." This longer phrase was also the slogan for the 1996 General Conference.
54. Friends of Bishop Tuell 2000; see also Tuell 2000.
55. Material in this paragraph is taken from Coalition for United Methodist Accountability 2000; McKay 2000; and Tanton 2000.
56. The charge against Talbert was eventually dropped.
57. "An independent organization of United Methodists [founded in 1907], the Methodist Federation for Social Action (MFSA) [brings together] United Methodist activists to promote action on justice, peace and liberation issues confronting the church and society. Working primarily through the ministries of the United Methodist Church, MFSA seeks to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the transformation of the social order that is intrinsic to the church's entire life, including its evangelism, preaching, counseling, and spirituality. . . . We advocate the full inclusion in the church of women, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgendered persons, those of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and people with disabilities" (Methodist Federation for Social Action 2000a, 2000b).
58. "Mission: IATC supports the full participation of all God's children in the UMC. Our mission is to promote action and legislation for the 2000 General Conference that eliminates heterosexism in the Church. Our objectives are: 1. To influence the UM 2000 GC delegates and delegations through education and witness. 2. To build and strengthen coalitions with other like-minded UM groups. 3. To develop financial and people resources to undergird this work. 4. To communicate the goals of IATC to the UMC, public media, and other target groups. 5. To monitor groups in the UMC that promote heterosexism and to respond to them strategically" (In All Things Charity 2000).
59. The material in this paragraph is taken from United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church 2001 and Vera 2000.
60. Material on Soulforce is taken from Soulforce 2000 and White 2000b.
61. A sample of homosexuality-related General Conference petition topics is presented in Appendix Two.
62. The Forum for Scriptural Christianity 2000b.
63. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
64. See *Book of Resolutions* 2000: 132–134, 430–437.
65. This section draws on Anderson 1997; Cadge 2002; Comstock 1996; Hutcheson and Shriver 1999; Robinson 2000; Robinson 2003a; Robinson 2003b; Robinson 2003c; Robinson 2003d; Robinson 2004; Robinson 2005a;

Robinson 2005b; Robinson 2005c; Robinson 2006a; Robinson 2006b; Robinson 2006d; and Robinson 2007.

66. It is important for LGBT people of faith to know that there are Christian denominations and other religious movements that are completely inclusive of LGBT people at all levels. For LGBT Christians who are drawn to Anglo-Catholic traditions, most Episcopal congregations are in fact completely welcoming even if the denomination is in struggle. Other liberal and mainline LGBT Christians may find a home in the United Church of Christ, while evangelical LGBT Christians often find the Metropolitan Community Churches to be a good fit. LGBT people who are not necessarily Christian but who like worship derived from Christianity may wish to learn about Unitarian Universalism. Moreover, some LGBT United Methodists, Presbyterians and Lutherans will find welcoming congregations if they live in cities or college towns, even if the denominations are not fully inclusive as such.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. See Lofland and Lofland 1995: 116, 145.
2. The conservative commitment to holding the line on homosexuality may also be driven by other, less theological motives, some of which are explored in this book.
3. United Methodist Church General Council on Ministries 1992; Williams 1994; Wood 2000.
4. Heidinger 2000 represents typical conservative writing, while Sample and DeLong 2000 represents a variety of inclusionist perspectives.
5. Union United Methodist is a historically black church in a section of Boston's South End that is a patchwork of working-class people of color and affluent (mostly white) gay men. The congregation's reconciling process began with the desire of a heterosexual church member to evangelize the local gay community.
6. United Methodists have an open communion and in most cases I partook of the bread and cup during worship services. Ethnographers would undoubtedly differ on whether this was the best course of action. A good argument could be made that I should not have done this primarily because I was not Christian, but also because I was supposed to be an observer, not a participant. Were I to do the research over, I would have to think hard about whether to handle this aspect of the fieldwork differently.
7. While many LGBT researchers might put "former" in quotes, I have tried to consistently address all parties in the struggle as they wish to be addressed, regardless of my personal perspective. I used the term "ex-gay" until a former homosexual requested that I change the language.
8. It is impossible to know how many people monitored what they said because I was taking notes. My sense is that most of the people with whom I interacted did not censor themselves in front of me, mostly because many of them were already on record as having said similar things; such is the advantage of talking with people who have strong public opinions on issues (or, conversely, whose opinions are so representative of the larger group as a whole that there is no risk in making the opinions public, as was true of moderates).
9. I told the respondent who I was, reminded them that we had set up the interview, asked whether the time still worked for them, and asked again whether it was acceptable for me to record the interview, assuring them of the confidentiality of the process. After warning them that discussing these issues

could be emotionally uncomfortable for some people, I reminded them that their participation was voluntary and that they were free to discontinue the interview or ask me to turn off the tape at any time. I also provided my contact information.

10. See Lofland and Lofland 1995: 85.
11. Witten used a structured discourse analysis to identify religious and social themes in sermons by Presbyterian and Southern Baptist pastors on the biblical parable of the prodigal son, ultimately making a larger argument that it is possible to study such processes as secularization through the analysis of religious talk.
12. See Williamson et al. 1982: 185–186, 207.
13. See Patton 1990.
14. Williamson et al. 1982: 14.
15. Ibid., 13.
16. As Gail Murphy-Geiss has pointed out, the fact that I was not and am not a United Methodist allowed me the freedom to leave General Conference 2000 and put the struggle behind me to some extent, which in fact I have done.
17. This section draws on Anderson 2006a; Anderson 2006b; Atkinson 2006; Ellis 2004; Ellis and Bochner 2000; Goodall 2000: 72; Goode 2006; and Van Maanen 1988. For the history of autoethnography as a concept and practice, see Reed-Danahay 1997 and Ellis and Bochner 2000: 739–740.
18. Lofland and Lofland 1995: 13.
19. Evocative autoethnography has become particularly associated with Carolyn Ellis and Art Bochner. See Ellis 2004; Ellis and Bochner 2000; Ellis and Bochner 2006.
20. Van Maanen (1988) refers to "realist," "confessional" and "impressionist" "tales of the field." The dedicated autoethnographer borrows from the confessional and impressionist categories. Using Van Maanen's terms, I would identify my work as falling between the realist and confessional approaches.
21. See Jorgensen 1989: 93–94; Krieger 1985; Ponticelli 1996; Ponticelli 1999.
22. Jorgensen 1989: 94; emphasis in original.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. All names in this chapter and hereafter are pseudonymous, except in cases where a public figure such as Fred Phelps is the object of reference.
2. Delegates and caucus members commonly refer to the *Book of Discipline* as the "*Discipline*;" both designations appear throughout the rest of this book.
3. The Shower of Stoles is "a collection of hundreds of liturgical stoles from gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people of faith from all over North America, from Canada to Cuba, Alaska to Hawaii. The individuals represented by these stoles are active leaders in their faith communities—ordained ministers, elders, deacons, seminarians, church musicians, missionaries, and other gifted people—who have been barred from serving their faith community because of their sexual orientation. This collection was created as a witness to give voice to these faithful people, many of whom have been forced to choose between serving in silence [and] losing their livelihood" (Shower of Stoles Project 2001).
4. Romans 8:38–39 reads, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Micah 6:6–8 reads, "With

what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?. . . . He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

5. In the Bible, sackcloth and ashes are associated with mourning and in some instances with humbling oneself in repentance; see, e.g., 1 Kings 21:27–29; Esther 4:1; Psalms 35:11–14 and 69:9–11; and Luke 10:13–14.
6. These passages are Genesis 18:20–19:25; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:18–32; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; and 1 Timothy 1:9–10.
7. Matthew 7:1 and Romans 2:1–3.
8. The text of this latter chant refers to the last wish of one of the two thieves who were crucified with Jesus, according to Luke 23 (32–33 and 39–42). Jesus is said to reply, "Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43).
9. See Exodus 32 for the story of the Golden Calf.
10. 1 Corinthians 12:12.
11. See Romans 8:18–25 and 8:31.
12. Matthew Shepard was beaten to death in an antigay hate crime in 1998.
13. Lyles 2000: 591.
14. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long."
15. Matthew 10:34.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 5

1. Bell 1999: 271.
2. See Warner 1988: chapter 2 for a summary of these differences.
3. See Grenz 1998; Hunter 1983: 85, 104–5; Hunter 1987: 60–61, 144–145; Mickey 1991; Roof and McKinney 1987: 192, 212; Schmidt 1995; and Smith 2000: 211–219.
4. The material in this paragraph is taken from Hunter 1991: 43–45 and 122–123.
5. In related work, Wuthnow (1988) speaks of liberals and conservatives, and Marty (1970: chapter 17) of modernists and fundamentalists.
6. The remainder of this paragraph is drawn from Hunter 1991: 43, 160–161, 147, and 52 (emphasis in original).
7. Wellman (1999: 184), in agreement with Hunter's conclusion, claims that in denominational sexuality struggles "symbolic positions are taken by religious elites [on both sides of the issue] in order to mobilize political movements, resources and members."
8. I have reproduced a chart detailing the distinctions between "reconciling" (progressivist) and "transforming" (orthodox) approaches to homosexuality in Appendix Three. For additional background material on orthodox and progressivist responses to homosexuality within the United Methodist Church see Johnson 1998.

9. Confessing Movement 1995; emphasis in original.
10. Sacramento 68 2000b.
11. Regarding non-negotiability and the inability or unwillingness to compromise among evangelicals, see Confessing Movement 1999; Mathison 2000: 2; Mickey 1991: 10. Other evangelicals said similar things in my interviews with them.
12. United Methodist Church Commission on General Conference 2000: 499–500.
13. Magagnini 2000.
14. Biblical scholarship and popularizations that the inclusionists might have read include Countryman 1990; Furnish 1981; Scanzoni and Mollenkott 1994; and Scroggs 1983. Hilton's (1992) book arguing for full inclusion has a chapter on biblical interpretation.
15. Robinson 2006b.
16. Ullestad et al. 2001: 13.
17. Crowner 1997: 102.
18. United Methodist Church General Board of Global Ministries 1999.
19. Wulf 1998a: 57.
20. Thanks to Gail Murphy-Geiss for suggesting this way of phrasing the relationship between experience and Scripture for inclusionists.
21. The delegate who argued that Scripture said homosexuality was wrong and nothing said it was right also mentioned personally having gay friends and relatives.
22. Isaiah 43:19 reads, "I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" Isaiah is speaking in God's voice here, a common practice of the Hebrew prophets, and is reporting what he understands as God's promise of restoration and protection to the Hebrews in exile. The main claim of Bishop Tuell's sermon was that God was doing a new thing in showing that homosexuality was an identity given to some of God's children, not an idolatrous sin.
23. Caldwell 2000: 103.
24. Weston 1999: 207; emphasis in original.
25. Mark 10:25.
26. See Matthew 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–12.
27. Among the many other examples that could be provided here are the commandments that appear near the prohibitions against male homosexuality in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13. See, for example, Leviticus chapters 12–13; 15; 17; 18:19; 19:5–10, 19, 27–28; and 21.
28. One reasonable rebuttal to this position, suggested to me by Gail Murphy-Geiss, is that conservatives and evangelicals read the biblical passages on homosexuality as clear and not in need of interpretation where other biblical passages might in fact require interpreting. Indeed, several conservative delegates said exactly this at various points during General Conference 2000. Regardless, it seems clear that those on both sides of the struggle appealed to their favorite biblical passages to justify their position. Such selectivity still seems questionable to me if the conservatives are truly orthodox in Hunter's sense of the term.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 6

1. Jung and Smith 1993: 139.
2. Hartman 1996: 17–18.
3. See Burgess 1999: 271; Rogers 1994: 170; Soucy 2005.

4. Stuart 2003: 83.
5. Sample 2000: 21.
6. On the cognitive dissonance of being lesbian/gay and Christian, see Lukenbill 1998; Mahaffy 1996; Ponticelli 1999; and Thumma 1991.
7. During the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reportedly asks, "Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone?" (Matthew 7: 9)
8. As noted in Chapter One, it is important to demonstrate that the mechanisms used by the church to devalue and disempower LGBT UMs are functionally identical to those used by both the church and society more generally to reinforce gender, race and class inequality, precisely because evangelicals and conservatives reject the claim that sexuality-based restrictions are equivalent to sexism, racism and class inequality.
9. See Fone 2000 for a history of homophobia. Also, this approach to homophobia leaves out a substantial and crucial component of it, namely the relationship between homophobia and sexism. Important literature on this subject includes Pharr's (1988) classic feminist discussion, Rudy's (1997) queer ethical reconstruction, and Kimmel's (2003) sociological analysis of masculinity as homophobia, all of which demonstrate ways in which homosexuality is a threat to the gender order. Future research on the UMC inclusion struggle would benefit from more extensive consideration of this point.
10. The term "heteronormativity" has also been used to describe this system.
11. Robinson 2003d.
12. See Exodus 20:15, 16, 14, and 12.
13. Nava and Dawidoff 1994: 5.
14. The term "clobber passages" is sometimes used by LGBT Christians to refer to the six passages most often used to justify the prohibition of homosexuality (Genesis 18:20–19:25; Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:18–32; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; and 1 Timothy 1:9–10).
15. Williams 1998.
16. Bradshaw 2003: 217; emphasis in original; Bates 2003.
17. One might argue that in this instance the problematic master status is simply "political extremist," not "LGBT person." Because of how deeply these two statuses were tied together by moderates and conservatives in my research experience, it is reasonable to consider them jointly.
18. Robinson 2003d.
19. Merton 1949: 482–483.
20. Hilton 1992: 55; emphasis in original.
21. Creech 1998.
22. Hunter 1991: 189.
23. Rogers 1994: 162.
24. The material in this paragraph is taken from Sered 1997: 1–2 and Sered 1999: 195.
25. All 2007 data in this section are from the Gallup Poll, May 10–13, 2007; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,003; as found at http://www.gallup-poll.com/content/default.aspx?ci=27694&VERSION=p on 26 July 2007. See Saad 2007.
26. All 2005 data in this section are from the Gallup Poll, May 2–5, 2005; +/- 5% margin of error; sample size = 1,005; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=16402&pg=2 on 26 July 2007. See Saad 2005.
27. These percentages have changed dramatically in the past 30 years, a point I address in Chapter Nine.
28. As Gail Murphy-Geiss points out, the "middle" may be widely understood as those who do not have strong opinions about homosexuality; if that is

the definition in use, clearly LGBT UMs are not part of the "middle." My concern in this context is that defining LGBT UMs as "the left" misses a substantial part of what is true about their lives, from the theological moderation that a number of them share to the fact that they appear to spend relatively little of their church lives protesting and demonstrating.

29. See Moon 2000 and DeLamater 1981 on the historical body/spirit split in Christianity and its resultant sexual asceticism, as well as on Christian traditions restricting sexual activity to married couples.
30. Hartman 1996: 35.
31. Davies (1982: 1032–3) argues that taboos against homosexuality in the west historically developed from the need to "establish and defend strong ethnic, religious, or institutional boundaries" because homosexuals are defined as "breach[ing] social or symbolic boundaries." Emphasizing boundaries enables a group to reinforce its distinctive identity. Similarly, Fone (2000: 6–7) observes that homophobia "tends to break out with special venom when people imagine a threat to the security of gender roles, of religious doctrine, or of the state and society."

NOTES TO CHAPTER 7

1. In 1 Corinthians 4:10–13, Paul writes of this persecution, "We are fools for the sake of Christ . . . we [are held] in disrepute. To the present hour we are hungry and thirsty, we are poorly clothed and beaten and homeless . . . We have become like the rubbish of the world, the dregs of all things."
2. For Marx's relevant comments on religion, see any reprint of the Introduction to Marx's "Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*;" for example Tucker 1978: 53–54.
3. United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church 2001.
4. Discussing the Presbyterian ordination prohibition, Anderson (1997: 43) similarly refers to "ecclesiastical apartheid."
5. Franks 1999.
6. Proclaiming the Vision Committee 1998.
7. Sacramento 68 2000b: 268.
8. Other mainline denominations use the same language. The co-moderator of a Presbyterian inclusionist group said of the 1997 "fidelity and chastity" amendment that the group was "deeply disappointed and outraged that our denomination has chosen to make [LGBT] Presbyterians second class members" (Robinson 2001b), while Presbyterian theologian Robert McAfee Brown has said that "second-class citizenship cannot be part of any institution that calls itself the church" (Thorson-Smith 1993: 33). See Hill 2002: 6 for use of this language from an ELCA perspective.
9. Contrast the Apostle Paul's insistence that Christian "citizenship" is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).
10. Lavender 2001.
11. Micah 6:8 reads, in part, "what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" while Amos 5:24 reads, "let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
12. This response on the part of conservatives and evangelicals is yet another example of moral alchemy at work. It should also be noted, however, that some contemporary biblical scholarship of the sort valued by religious progressivists (and generally dismissed by conservatives) describes Jesus as simultaneously a religious and political figure. When inclusionists use

"religious-political" language, then, they are being true to a larger way of understanding Jesus that may differ from the conservatives, but that is no less Christian. Thanks to Gail Murphy-Geiss for reminding me of this last point.

13. Matthew 28:19.
14. Galatians 3:28.
15. Epworth United Methodist Church 1999.
16. Sacramento 68 2000b: 152 and 268.
17. This comment is a reference to Jesus' parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32).
18. This language is based on the Apostle Peter's writing (1 Peter 2:9–10). Interestingly, the same quote is used by the Unofficial Confessing Movement (n.d.) in its anti-inclusionist document "The More Excellent Way."
19. The reference here is to the Hebrew Bible's story of Jacob wrestling with God and being blessed with the new name of Israel (Genesis 32:22–32).
20. The irony that the quadrennial reworking of the *Book of Discipline* is itself explicitly political (and currently controlled by conservatives) is addressed in Chapter Eight.
21. Luke 4:18–19.
22. The reference here is from Exodus 3:7–8.
23. Sacramento 68 2000a and Sacramento 68 2000b: 175.
24. See Parkin (1979); Disco (1987); Murphy (1988); and Manza (1992).
25. While Parkin (1979: 70) mentions "homosexuals" as an out-group facing social closure, I have not found any other studies that applied a closure analysis to LGBT inequality.
26. See Stan 1996 for evidence of UMAction's boundary policing prior to its becoming part of CUMA.
27. See Schwalbe and Mason-Schrock 1996 on boundary policing and Nippert-Eng 1996: xiii on boundary work.
28. Parents' Reconciling Network 2000; emphasis in original.
29. Robinson (2001a) notes that Presbyterian conservatives also created a resolution that would have allowed lesbian/gay ordination supporters to leave the denomination and take their church property with them.
30. The Forum for Scriptural Christianity 2000b.
31. Additional support for this claim can be found in Kiely 2000a, 2000b.
32. In addition to Isaiah 43:19, inclusionists drew on the stories of Jesus and the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21–28); Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–38); and Peter's encounter with unclean foods which God commanded him to eat (Acts 10:9–16) and his eventual response that "God shows no partiality" to specific groups of people (Acts 10:34–35). Isaiah 43:19 is the source of the language about God "doing a new thing." The story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman begins with Jesus' insistence that he came only to heal "the lost sheep of Israel," but ends with his healing of the Canaanite woman's daughter, suggesting that even Jesus might grow and change over the course of his ministry. The two stories from the Acts of the Apostles both show how the early apostles were challenged by God to conceive of their mission more "inclusively."
33. Matthew 7:1–5.
34. Matthew 7:15–20.
35. The full quote can be found on page 78 of the 2000 edition of the *Book of Discipline*: "We interpret individual texts in light of their place in the Bible as a whole. We are aided by scholarly inquiry and personal insight, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As we work with each text, we take into account what we have been able to learn about the original context and intention of

that text. In this understanding, we draw upon the careful historical, literary, and textual studies of recent years." From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.

36. The material in this paragraph is taken from Flanery 1983; Gallagher and Bull 1996: 26–28; Herek 2000a; and Herman 1998.
37. Cameron may be best known for his claim that the average life expectancy of a gay man is 39, based on statistics culled from obituaries published in the gay press (Gallagher and Bull 1996: 27). For scientific critiques of Cameron's work, see Gallagher and Bull 1996: 27–28; Herek 2000b; and Herek 2000c. For repudiation of his work by mainstream psychologists and sociologists, see Gallagher and Bull 1996: 27–28.
38. Sacramento 68 2000b: 145 and 166–167.
39. A published version of these claims can be found in Howell 2003; while Howell also does not use the term "social closure" he documents the use of slander and political activism by conservative UMs, including the apparent use of homosexuality as what one inclusionist called a "wedge issue." For a similar analysis of the conservative movement in the PCUSA see Daly 2000.
40. That inclusionists made this claim does not make the claim empirically accurate. Indeed, my assumption is that conservatives and other "non-inclusionists" were acting on the basis of sincerely held beliefs about homosexuality. I include this inclusionist comment because it supports my sense that at least some inclusionists had an informal closure analysis.
41. Sample 2000: 16–17.
42. That the holy union was political did not make it less sacred. At General Conference 2000 I got to see a video of the ceremony. It was clearly a powerful spiritual experience for those participating, and quite moving to watch.
43. Luke 18:1–8.
44. Soucy (2005) reports the similar presence, in appearance and action, of inclusionists at the 2005 ELCA denominational assembly.
45. Soucy (ibid.) reports that an inclusionist group moved from the ELCA Visitors Gallery into the Voting Members area in protest during their 2005 denominational assembly because "it was apparent to us that the Assembly was having a discussion about GLBT people as if they were not in the room. So we interposed ourselves so they could see us and know that people were affected by their decisions." Shortly after this action, the assembly voted to deny a lesbian minister the right to speak to them; she had planned to say, among other things, "Look into our eyes and faces so we will no longer be merely an 'issue.'" Thanks to Phoebe Lostroh for pointing out the irony that ELCA inclusionists had to rely on a political action to try to convince opponents to see them as "people" rather than "issues."
46. Powell's use of the term "homosexual-Americans" suggests the extent to which the early 1970s lesbian/gay movement's strategy of arguing for homosexuality as a kind of ethnicity has succeeded, even in some unexpected quarters.
47. White 2000a.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 8

1. Oliveto 2002: vii.
2. The Forum for Scriptural Christianity 2000b.
3. DeMichele 1999.
4. UM Decision 2000 2000b.

5. Corn 1998: 296.
6. Balay 2000.
7. Moon 2000: 303.
8. Ullestad et al. 2001: 19.
9. Ibid., 20; emphasis in original.
10. Unofficial Confessing Movement. n.d.
11. Gentile 2000; emphasis in original.
12. Comments about the distinction between civil rights and "truth" or Scripture also appear among Presbyterians (Smith 2001) and Lutherans ("Debate on Possible Strategies for Ordination Defeated" 1999).
13. Material from this paragraph through the end of the section is taken from Mott 1992 and Stotts 2000.
14. Heidinger 2000: 10–11, 44.
15. See also Moon 2004: 141.
16. Temple et al. 1998: 44.
17. Contrast Winner's assertion with Messer's (1994: 182) inclusionist claim that "championing involuntary celibacy for gays and lesbians seems to deny them their God-given rights for sexual love, intimacy and security."
18. Weston 1999: 207; emphasis in original.
19. Johnson 2000.
20. This section is primarily based on Friedland and Alford 1991: 232, 248–249, and 255–256, except where otherwise noted.
21. While not quite as direct an example, the comment attributed to Jesus that "no one can serve God and [money]" (Matthew 6:24) is also relevant here.
22. Friedland and Robertson 1990: 37.
23. I find support for these additions in, respectively, Berger, Berger and Kellner 1973:14–16 and Swidler 1986.
24. This section is primarily based on Friedland and Alford 1991: 248–250, except where otherwise noted.
25. Stout and Cormode (1998: 71) claim that "without a logic of transcendent truth the Christian religion falls apart." This comment goes a long way toward explaining the fears of UM evangelicals, conservatives and moderates.
26. A "cosmogony" in this context refers to an account of the creation of the universe or the world that is part of a larger religious explanation of life's purpose.
27. Hunter 1987: 158–159.
28. Other research on evangelicals supports this claim. Hunter (1987: 19–20, 56–57, 157–160) discusses the historic role of theological truth and moral asceticism in distinguishing "godly living" from "worldliness;" he also notes (1987: 57) that "moral character, defined as conformity to these normative standards, was . . . significant for the purely practical purpose of distinguishing the faithful from the unfaithful." Smith (1998: 121) similarly claims that "distinction, engagement, and conflict vis-à-vis outsiders constitute . . . a crucial element of what we might call the 'cultural DNA' of American evangelicalism. The evangelical tradition's entire history, theology, and self-identity [presuppose and reflect] strong cultural boundaries with non-evangelicals."
29. Gancarz 2000; emphasis in original.
30. United Methodist Church 2000: 2376.
31. Matthew 5:13.
32. "For I am the Lord your God; sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy, for I am holy."
33. From the *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.

34. Evangelicals and conservatives most commonly appeal to the story of God's creation of humankind as heterosexual (Genesis 1:26–28; Genesis 2:21–24) in claiming that heterosexuality is normative.
35. United Methodist Church Commission on General Conference 2000: 491.
36. UM Decision 2000 2000a.
37. The reference here is to Islam's dietary laws, in which certain foods are acceptable, and others, such as pork, are forbidden. Pork's forbidden status in Islam is detailed in verses 2:173, 5:3, 6:145, and 16:115 of the Qur'an.
38. Inclusionists would of course claim that the conservative choice of homosexuality as the final holding point is homophobic and heterosexist. They would likely respond to these conservatives by asking why economic injustice, violence and war (for example) don't represent the real breakdown of moral standards. They might say that respecting human dignity ought to "form the heart of what we believe and how we live and who we are." In this sense, the larger political commitments of the conservatives and evangelicals (and not just their homophobia and heterosexism) are made plain in the comments reported here.
39. United Methodist Church 2000: 2376. This quote indicates the extent to which conservatives perceive that the church "tapestry" is already destroyed.
40. Indeed, this delegate told me "that statement is as close to God's truth as anything I've ever seen. It's a magnificent statement, really, because it says exactly where we are."
41. Chaves' (1997: 190) comments on denominational identity and lesbian/gay ordination are relevant here. Chaves observes that "the very small number of openly homosexual clergy in Protestant denominations debating the issue means that the vast majority of congregations would never realistically be faced with the prospect of an actual gay pastor" while speculating that "there are churches in many denominations pastored by more or less . . . openly gay individuals who are well loved by congregations [that], nevertheless, would balk at supporting a formal rule officially endorsing full clergy rights for homosexuals." Chaves concludes that "rules about gay clergy . . . appear to reflect the construction of denominational collective identity as much as, and perhaps more than, the regulation of day-to-day lives of real people in real congregations."
42. See Katzenstein 1998 for an extended discussion of the practices, meaning systems and priorities of bringing feminist protest inside the church and the military.
43. One might argue that the evangelicals and the inclusionists should be equally "accused" of drawing on democratic logic, given the political nature of the evangelicals' actions in response to the inclusionists. I address this point below.
44. Moon (2000: 116) has made a similar, and similarly important, point without precisely couching it in terms of institutional logics: "when [LGBT] members begin to demand 'rights' in the church, they bring in a language of political struggle, of civil rights. In other words, they import a language that many believe pertains to the world rather than God, to bodies rather than spirits, to politics rather than innocence."
45. Ullestad et al. 2001: 20; emphasis in original.
46. Meyer 1987: 247–248.
47. See Brown 1987; Dumont 1986; and Frank, Meyer and Miyahara 1995.
48. Roof 1999: 130; emphasis in original.
49. Altman 1982: 73.
50. Stout and Cormode 1998: 73; emphasis in original.

51. United Methodist Church 2002.
52. UM Decision 2000 2000b.
53. "Africa," of course, is not a monolithic entity when it comes to opposition to homosexuality. South Africa has lesbian and gay rights built into its constitution, and Desmond Tutu, the Archbishop of Cape Town, wrote a deeply sympathetic Foreword for a UM inclusionist book (Alexander and Preston 1996: ix-x). Thanks to Phoebe Lostroh for reminding me of this point.
54. Longden 2003: 57.
55. In part, the difference is that while both the inclusionists and the evangelicals use a political process, only the inclusionists incorporate democratic logic into the content of their aims, and as a result, only the inclusionists are castigated for "bringing politics into the church" (by incorporating a political content instead of "merely" using political machinations to win votes).
56. Nava and Dawidoff (1994) have written a book entitled *Created Equal* that argues for the importance of U.S. lesbian/gay rights. The entire book may be seen as a brief for democratic logic in the public sphere as it affects LGBT people. Its key points are individualism, rights, privacy, reliance on the law, and justice; interestingly, the authors are quite suspicious of organized religion as the natural enemy of LGBT people. Despite their book title, Nava and Dawidoff are far more concerned about the "equal" part than the "created" part.
57. During the 2004 General Conference, two prominent conservatives talked openly about a possible "amicable divorce" over "irreconcilable differences," mentioning a possible resolution to this effect, and both delegates and liberal leaders rejected the idea soundly. Delegates approved, 869 to 41, a one-sentence resolution, "As United Methodists we remain in covenant with one another, even in the midst of disagreement, and reaffirm our commitment to work together for our common mission of making disciples throughout the world." Prior to the vote, they joined hands and sang the hymn, "Blest be the Tie that Binds" (Caldwell 2004a, 2004b; Dart 2004). This moment may have been the first time that the conservatives were treated as spoilers or deal-breakers. It remains to be seen whether or how these events will impact General Conference 2008.
58. The inclusionist situation is reminiscent of claims made by social reproduction theorists (Willis 1977; Burawoy 1979; Holland and Eisenhart 1990; MacLeod 1995) that inequality is reproduced in part because members of disempowered groups take actions that sustain the very structures and culture that limit them. Social reproduction theory starts with the assumptions that individual choices are made in the context of group identities and that choices made by members of devalued groups are likely to contribute to the reproduction of their devaluation, simply because of the way social inequality works. However, in the limited space available for members of devalued groups to make life choices, there are better and worse options. The point is not to "blame the victim" but rather to shed light on the options available to socially devalued groups so that they and their supporters can most effectively challenge the inequality they face. Social reproduction theorists observe that members of devalued groups make choices that appear to go against their interests partly because they derive certain benefits from the choices, such as psychological comfort, a sense of community and an experience of themselves as decision-makers in their own lives. Members of devalued groups are also aware to some degree that making "better" choices might not improve their lives over time and would certainly rob them of certain benefits. Ultimately, the choices that do get made contribute to the reproduction of the inequality that limits people's life chances and

experiences in the first place. When inclusionists affirm their LGBT and heterosexual ally selves through garb, witness and protest, they derive benefit from these choices, particularly psychological, spiritual and community-building benefits. Both in private conversations and during AMAR strategy sessions, I heard inclusionists express concern about potentially negative effects of witnessing and protesting, only to be convinced by others (or convince themselves) that witnessing and protesting were the best choices they could make given the circumstances. Finally, listening to strategy meetings and watching the witnessing and protests made it clear that these actions both restored inclusionist dignity and allowed inclusionists to have a sense of control over their lives in a context where control was otherwise stripped away.

59. Sacramento 68 2000a.
60. DeLong 2000: 30.
61. Sacramento 68 2000b: 52.
62. Ibid., 127. This last phase derives from Amos 5:24, which reads "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."
63. Wogaman 2000: 175.
64. See, particularly, Wolfe 1992 and Smith 1998: chapter 4.
65. Galatians 3:28.
66. An inclusionist brought charges against the Sacramento 68. Her bringing charges, despite her sympathy with the values of the Sacramento 68, provides further evidence of the extent to which this struggle is over institutional maintenance for at least some United Methodists.
67. Hunter defines people with orthodox moral commitments as believing that an "eternal, definable, and transcendent authority" (1991: 44) makes certain truths known to humanity; these truths are non-negotiable because they come, not from limited human perspectives, but from a reality that is holy and ultimate (1991: 122).
68. Progressivists are committed to the belief that "truth [is] a process, a reality that is ever unfolding" (1991: 44), and that, therefore, traditional faith needs to be supplemented with contemporary wisdom and insights (1991: 123). According to Hunter, progressivists retool religion so that it is capable of incorporating "the prevailing assumptions of contemporary life" (1991: 44–45).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 9

1. Coyner 1998.
2. Wellman 1999: 185; Cadge, Day and Wildeman 2007: 256; Longden 1998; McCaughan 2006; Messer and Geis 1994: 15; and Stephens 1997: 218.
3. Weston 1999: 219–220.
4. See, for example, The Forum for Scriptural Christianity 1999.
5. *Book of Resolutions* 2000: 160. From the *Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church—2000*. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by Permission.
6. See Appendix One.
7. The data in this paragraph are taken from Wood 2000: 20, 23, 89 and 111; Wood and Bloch 1995: 126; and James R. Wood, personal communication, July 17, 2007. A total of 277 delegates answered these questions in 1992; the numbers were 589 in 1996, 555 in 2000, and 502 in 2004.
8. Forty-seven percent agreed that homosexuality was a sin in 1992, 46 percent agreed in 1996, 47 percent agreed in 2000 and 48 percent agreed in 2004.

9. About a third of respondents agreed that "homosexuals should be ordained within the UMC" in 1992 (32 percent) and 1996 (34 percent). In 2000 and 2004, the number jumped to 40 percent.
10. A quarter of respondents agreed that "homosexual marriages should be permitted within the UMC" in 1992; that number jumped to 29 percent in 1996, dipped to 26 percent in 2000, and rose very slightly to 27 percent in 2004. Interestingly, when Wood added an item enabling delegates to agree or disagree that "ceremonies blessing 'holy unions' of same-sex couples should be allowed within the UMC," about four-tenths of delegates responding agreed (40 percent in 2000 and 41 percent in 2004). This finding indicates that the term "holy union" is less problematic for delegates than "homosexual marriage."
11. Lawrence 1998: 11–12.
12. For the *1970s*: Gallup Poll, June 17–20, 1977; no margin of error given; sample size = 1,513; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/Braincontent/release/1977_07_18.pdf on 26 July 2007. For the *1980s*: (1) Gallup Poll, June 25–28, 1982; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,531; as found at http://institution.gallup.com/Braincontent/release/1982_11_07.pdf on 26 July 2007 ("alternative lifestyle" item only) and (2) Gallup Poll, October 12–15, 1989; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,227; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/Braincontent/release/1989_10_25.pdf on 26 July 2007 (all other 1980s items). For the *1990s*: (1) Gallup Poll, March 15–17, 1996; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,008; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?STUDY=CNN9603008 on 14 September 2007 (same-sex marriage item only); (2) Gallup Poll, February 8–9, 1999; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,064; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=4045 on 26 July 2007; (3) Gallup Poll, February 19–21, 1999; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,014; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=3943 on 26 July 2007; and (4) Gallup Poll, May 10–14, 2001; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,012; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/documents/questionnaire.aspx?Study=P0105017 (data) and http://brain.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=3163 (margin of error and sample size) on 2 September 2007 ("morally acceptable" item only). For the *2000s*: Gallup Poll, May 2–5, 2005; +/-5% margin of error; sample size = 1,005; as found at http://brain.gallup.com/content/default.aspx?ci=16402&pg=2 on 26 July 2007 (all questions about hiring "homosexuals" for specific jobs) and Gallup Poll, May 10–13, 2007; +/- 3% margin of error; sample size = 1,003; as found at http://www.galluppoll.com/content/default.aspx?ci=27694&VERSION=p on 26 July 2007 (all other 2000s items). For original reports, see Colasanto 1989; Gallup 1977; Gallup 1982; Gillespie 1999; Newport 1999; "Questionnaire Profile: Gallup Poll Social Series—Values and Beliefs" 2001; "Questionnaire Profile: March Wave 2" 1996; Saad 2001; Saad 2005; and Saad 2007.
13. Support for same-sex marriage rose and fell somewhat during years unreported in this table.
14. See Appendix One.
15. Support for the incompatibility language has fluctuated over time, reaching a high of 76 percent in 1980 and a low of 60 percent in 1996. Because support for this language has risen and fallen at least three times (not taking into account votes for which I could not find information), the most recent drop in support for the incompatibility language does not necessarily suggest any patterned directional change for the future.
16. See Church within a Church Movement 2007.

17. See Smith 1998 for extensive support of this claim as it applies to evangelicals.
18. My observations, and the comments of some inclusionists, suggest that young evangelicals are less homophobic and heterosexist (in the analytic sense of the terms) than older evangelicals. If true, this demographic difference might also impact the church's position over time to some degree.
19. Material in this section is drawn from DeRose 2007; Robinson 2003d; Robinson 2006c; and Soucy 2005.
20. More generally, visible inclusionist sympathy for moderates could be of strategic value.
21. As an example, Dillon's (1999) study of "pro-change Catholics" (lesbian/gay Catholics, pro-choice Catholics, Catholics supporting women's ordination as priests) suggests that people can work to make their religious traditions "more inclusive, participatory and pluralistic" (Dillon 1999: 1) with only minimal recourse to political language. Pro-change Catholics use a sophisticated level of "doctrinal reflexivity" to find within their tradition those "emancipatory elements that legitimate both their demands for a more egalitarian, inclusive and deliberative church, and their choice to affirm an identity that maintains solidarity with the larger Catholic community" (1999: 31). Inclusionists do rely on UM equivalents of these discourses, but might ask themselves whether they rely on them as often or as publicly as they could.
22. It also may be that the inclusionists' use of civil rights language, symbols and culture (songs, for example) is distasteful and offensive to those African Americans who do not see the two causes as equivalent. Inclusionists might assess the extent to which this is the case within the denomination, simply for strategic purposes. I am grateful to Eva Garroutte for reminding me of this point.
23. It is tempting to suggest that the inclusionists also put more effort into pointing out to moderates just how inappropriately political the conservative caucuses are. A number of inclusionists made comments to this effect, including one who told me that the evangelicals were the "political professionals" and the inclusionists, "mere novices." Given the mechanisms of homophobia and heterosexism, however, such a strategy could easily backfire.
24. Ammerman (1997: chapter 4) demonstrates how congregations with a mix of heterosexual and LGBT people become successfully integrated. While none of her cases involve UM churches, her work still offers insights to the enterprising inclusionist.
25. See Oliveto 2002: 167–169; see also Cadge 2005 for a thoughtful discussion of reconciling congregations with heterosexual members who have had their perspectives changed through encounters with LGBT UMs.
26. Epstein 1987: 47; emphasis in original.

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