The institution of marriage stands at a critical juncture. As gay marriage equality gains acceptance in law and public opinion, questions abound regarding marriage's future. Will same-sex marriage lead to more radical marriage reform? Should it? Antonin Scalia and many others on the right warn of a slippery slope from same-sex marriage toward polygamy, adult incest, and the dissolution of marriage as we know it. Equally, many academics, activists, and intellectuals on the left contend that there is no place for monogamous marriage as a special status defined by law. This book demonstrates that both sides are wrong: the same principles of democratic justice that demand marriage equality for same-sex couples also lend support to monogamous marriage. The book displays the groundlessness of arguments against same-sex marriage and defends marriage as a public institution against those who would eliminate its special status or supplant it with private arrangements. Arguing that monogamy reflects and cultivates our most basic democratic values, the book opposes the legal recognition of polygamy, but agrees with progressives that public policies should do more to support nontraditional caring and caregiving relationships. Throughout, the book explores the meaning of contemporary marriage and the reasons for its fragility and its enduring significance. Casting new light on today's debates over the future of marriage, the book lays the groundwork for a stronger institution.
This chapter provides a narrative of the author's performance and retraces her unique tactics of setting an admirable example in turning the institution of heterosexual, monogamous, and monosexual marriage inside out. It also shows the vitality and pleasure of a possible queer politics and counter-public which prioritizes non-normative intimacies, coalition building, sex education, and advocacy over love, privacy, and the life-long couple form of marriage. Together with some other gay activists, she decided to organize a fake wedding to encourage further thinking about and discussion of the issues of marriage. She proposed to a gay activist who was a long-time friend, and a lesbian woman whom she had just met. There would be three of them in a marriage: one gay man and two lesbian women. The wedding ceremony was to claim that bisexuality is not a crime.

Public Emblem, Private Realm: Family and Polity in the United States
Nancy F. Cott

This chapter discusses how conceptions of family have figured centrally in the history of thinking about American representative government. Although common wisdom roots American democracy conceptually in individualism, with a political genealogy indebted to the social contract theory of John Locke and his fellow liberals, there is at least equal evidence for a political genealogy leading from Montesquieu and the Scottish moralists to root American representative government in a family unit based on monogamous marriage.