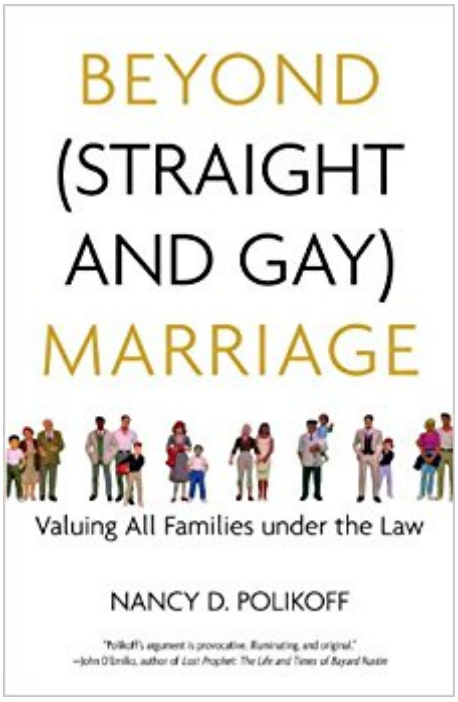
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Beyond (Straight And Gay) Marriage: Valuing All Families Under The Law (Queer Ideas/Queer Action)



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Synopsis

Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage reframes the family-rights debate by arguing that marriage shouldn't bestow special legal privileges upon couples because people, both heterosexual and LGBT, live in a variety of relationships-including unmarried couples of any sexual orientation, single-parent households, extended biological family units, and myriad other familial configurations. Nancy D. Polikoff shows how the law can value all families, and why it must.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

With her freshman book, law professor Polikoff, who has taught, litigated and written about family law, civil procedure and sexuality for more than 30 years, deftly argues that the law's narrow definitions of family and marriage no longer work in today's societyÃ¢â ¬â •not just for the LGBT community but the country at large. With many households following untraditional family models, Polikoff says, we need to look at ways the law can change to value all families beyond those created by marriage, including same and different-sexed, married and unmarried couples. Polikoff draws on legal history and contemporary (often eye-opening) court cases to make her argument. Topics such as inheritance, tax consequences, workers' compensation death benefits, social security, probate, adoption and health care, plus their impact the diversity of today's family units are simplified for the reader. Polikoff wades through legislation and legalese with style and substance, plus a touch of flair. Impeccably researched, the book offers an evocative read that takes in the full breadth of the issues affecting marriages and avoids pedantry while remaining persuasive. (Feb.)

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Polikoff wades through legislation and legalese with style and substance, plus a touch of flair. Impeccably researched, the book offers an evocative read that takes in the full breadth of the issues affecting marriages and avoids pedantry while remaining persuasive.Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers Weekly"Polikoff's argument is provocative, illuminating, and original."Ã¢â ¬â •John D'Emilio, author of Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin"The book many have been waiting for . . . Polikoff provides answers worth contemplation and implementation." Ã¢â ¬â •Ruthann Robson, Professor of Law and University Distinguished Professor, City University of New York School of Law, Women's Review of Books"Polikoff's book comes just in time . . . Using real case studies, Polikoff makes a strong case that furthering the legal protections for all people, regardless of relationship status, will help the LGBT community more than marriage itself."Ã¢â ¬â •Rachel Pepper, Curve Magazine"A bold, detailed, reasoned (even subversive) tome that makes the case for moving the debate beyond the issue of marriage rights and into the realm of creating laws that protect all of us."Ã¢â ¬â •Scott Stiffler, Edge"This book really matters. It is brilliant and thoughtful-not simply about a set of laws, it is a manifesto to transform the way we understand, recognize, and respect the reality of our diverse and complex family compositions."Ã¢â ¬â •Amber Hollibaugh, senior strategist, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force"Polikoff mobilizes an impressive array of legal history and contemporary court cases to show how marriage, whether same-sex or heterosexual, has ceased to be the only place where people incur long-term obligations."Ã¢â ¬â •Stephanie Coontz, author of Marriage, a History: How Love Conquered Marriage

Probably too late for this approach, but a great book for those who are interested in the legal aspects of marriage, straight OR gay. I found it a very good read. Gives some not-so-obvious ideas to ponder.

This text offers an important expansion of the narrow question: are you for or against 'gay marriage'? By asking us to expand our vision and calling for a broader revision of family law, the author offers a way out of the gay morality trap that will lead to greater rights and autonomy for everyone, regardless of sexual orientation. At times the text is a bit dense and repetitive and could have benefited from some closer editing but the importance of the ideas makes it worth slogging

through what is at times plodding prose.

I highly recommend this book to college students, law students, attorneys, religious leaders, and policy makers - gay or straight - anyone who is searching for a better way to conceptualize family values in this country. The author provides an in-depth history of the LGBT rights movement juxtaposed against the rise of the Christian Right and delivers a very moving argument for why we should start to untangle sex-based relationships from the civil institution of marriage and move to a model based on dependency - the original purpose of marriage. In today's modern world, there are many different kinds of families - gay couples raising adopted children; single mothers living with their siblings; adult children helping their elderly parents; etc. etc. These families are built on dependency - each individual supports or depends on another and the government should intervene in a way that rewards such relationships, e.g. by providing health insurance and other benefits that are often provided only for spouses or unrelated domestic partners. This book is a fascinating read and would make an excellent addition to the collection of any scholar of history, politics, feminism, or religion.

Nancy Polikoff, a professor of law at the American University Washington College of Law, has researched the very current topic of 'marriage rights' that for the most part are regarded by the general public as the battle between same sex and different sex marriage, an area where there is very little equality or respect to be gleaned from the media, and hence the public. Polikoff wisely approaches this disparity of human rights from an angle that allows every reader to become involved in her plea for reconsideration of what is labeled (and respected) as 'family'.Too often books on the subject of gay rights are so skewed that they end up preaching to the choir or throwing fire on a malignant issue: the audience craving equality under the law for legalizing same sex marriage is balanced against the radical right who condemn the domestic partnership idea as a sin. Polikoff recognizes this schism and in her very natural manner of writing poses examples of units of people whose rights are denied by Social Security policies, child care conflicts resulting from the definition of 'parent', and even rights for visitation in hospitals or hospices when the allowed visitors are 'family only'. Why must the label 'marriage' be the deciding factor in units of loving people whose potential for and production of caring homes be the norm?The subtitle of Polikoff's fine book - VALUING ALL FAMILIES UNDER THE LAW - is well chosen and in many ways is the major message of her book. She asserts that all family relationships and households deserve equal rights now saved only for married couples. This change in approach to the importance of re-defining 'what

is a family' holds the value of her work: according to Polikoff, 'family' denotes unmarried couples of any sexual orientation, single-parent households, and the many variations of extended family units, each of which deserves recognition as mutually beneficial cohesive units entitled to the same benefits in the workplace, in government law, and in rights afforded to all citizens.In what will rightly become a powerful resource for sociological studies Nancy Polikoff has elected to make this carefully researched and documented text as reader friendly as possible. Libraries should add this book to their shelves for student studies: the general public would greatly benefit from reading her concepts in hopes of expanding the understanding and appreciation of the transformation of the concept of 'family' today. Highly recommended. Grady Harp, March 08

Marriage should wholly be a spiritual, religious, and cultural experience - in no point should it have any legal ramifications or even benefits, argues "Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage: Valuing all Families under the Law". Author Nancy D. Polikoff, a professor of law, says that by legally recognizing some relationships, regardless of gender makeup, as legal and not others, many families suffer, arguing that the marriage movement rejects LGBT equality, no fault divorce, and childbearing and sex outside marriage. Cunningly argued, "Beyond (Straight and Gay) Marriage: Valuing all Families under the Law" is enthusiastically recommended for any social issues or gay issues community library shelves or for anyone who wants a differing opinion on the marriage issue.

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