



# Same-Sex Marriage, Context, and Lesbian Identity: Wedded but Not Always a Wife

*Julie Whitlow, Patricia Ould*

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This book demonstrates that everyday interactions and struggles over the right words to use are at the heart of the experience of those in same-sex marriages. At a time when same-sex marriage is on the cusp of becoming legal across the United States, the authors demonstrate through in-depth interviews and rich survey data how the use of relationship terms by married lesbians is tied to a variety of factors that influence how their identities are shaped and presented across social contexts. Via rich anecdotes of how married lesbians navigate the social sphere through their varied use or avoidance of the use of the term *wife*, this volume is provides groundbreaking insights into how social change is being constructed and made sense of through an examination of real-life interactions with family and friends, on the job, and across service and casual encounters.

The authors introduce us to the concept of *contextual identity* to explain how history and social context inspire cultural change. This first-of-its-kind analysis demonstrates how the first lesbians to marry have navigated acceptance and rejection, insecurity and political strength through their use of language in daily interactions. This book will surely resonate with anyone interested in understanding how married lesbians are presenting themselves at this historical juncture where social change and linguistic nuance are colliding.

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