

# Sophia's Correspondence with President Obama: A Durkheimian Analysis of Contemporary American Society

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## Abstract

“Gay rights” have been a major issue particularly during the presidential elections in the United States over the years. The two political camps—the Democrats and the Republicans—are used to engaging in serious debate with regard to legalization of gay-marriage before every election in the recent past. In the last presidential elections held on 6 November 2012, this issue was reinforced and gained renewed attention in the political landscape of the United States. The Democrats, commonly known as “social-liberal”, are usually sympathetic to gay-people’s rights, while the Republicans are socially conservative and not positive toward gayism. In 2012 elections, the Democrats directly support the demand for homosexual marriage. In that context, just a few days ahead of elections, a ten-year-old American girl—Sophia Bailey Klugh—wrote an emotional letter to President Barack Obama, Democratic Party’s candidate, thanking him for his support of gay-marriage, and sharing some painful personal experience with homosexuality (see Appendix 1). President Obama responded to little Sophia with a great compassion and care (see Appendix 2), which drew huge public attention not only in the United States, but also in international arena. Although the contents of both letters are brief and precise, they reflect some significant socio-cultural realities and trajectories of the twenty-first-century American society. Against this backdrop, this paper, especially focusing on the conversations between Sophia and Obama, attempts to analyze the contemporary American society in the light of Durkheim’s sociological theory.

**Keywords:** Durkheim, social solidarity, anomie, Sophia-Obama correspondence, American society, democracy, gay-marriage.

## 1. Introduction

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), a French sociologist and one of the founding fathers of Sociology, breathed his last about a century ago. Durkheim’s sociology, analogous to other sociologists’ works, had a time-dimension and was affected by the social conditions of his time. Moreover, his philosophical ideas did not remain static even in his own life-time. Scholars such as Talcott Parsons observes Durkheim’s wobbly philosophical stand and notes that Durkheim held two opposing views during his life-time—the young Durkheim was a positivist, and the mature one an idealist (Ritzer 2011: 204). Therefore, it seems difficult how Durkheimian sociological theory would explain the twenty-first-century American society. However, this paper endeavors to make a sociological analysis of the contemporary American society based on the conversations between President Obama and Sophia and within the framework of Durkheimian sociology.

Durkheim is often referred as a “sociologist of morality” since he was in belief that every society, for its existence, requires “a strong common morality” (Ritzer 2011: 189). The letter-correspondence between Sophia and the U. S. president is principally marked by the morality issue of the American society. The moral questions which are the main focus of both letters can be explained according to Durkheim’s sociological theories, such as “social fact”, “social solidarity” and “division of labor” etc. However, this paper particularly argues that the commentaries of two letters can be best explained by two different theoretical underpinnings suggested by Durkheim—the background and contents of Sophia’s letter resemble a gap between culture and structure in U. S. society (i. e. an anomic situation), while Obama’s response reflects the Durkheimian concept of state and democracy. For a better understanding of the subject, it requires to at least briefly focus on several theoretical accounts propounded by Durkheim.

## 2. Culture and Structure

Structure means the ways in which people are arranged with respect to one another; while culture refers to how strongly a group of people share certain ‘ideals.’ In other words, structure is the totality of social interactions and culture is the strength of group-identity in a particular society. A particular structure is associated with a particular type of culture; and structural changes lead to cultural changes; but the pace of change between them may vary. Every man in society lives in a duality. He constantly faces a struggle between his own ‘will’ and the ‘ideal’ of his society which turns him into a *homo duplex*. Societal ideals regulate individual will. Since society is not a mere aggregation of individuals but an interacting collectivity, every member of a given society is bound

to conform to societal norms and values. Durkheim calls the integral force of society as ‘social solidarity’ which nourishes individual freedom in a particular way. For Durkheim, as Mestrovic notes, a socialized man is actually most free of society, since he can be an individual only when his will is restrained (Cited in Hall 1990: 1008). In this sense, Durkheimian concept of freedom holds a special meaning that social obligations must regulate individual wills. Although ‘the cult of the individual’, and the treatment to individual and his freedom of choice as sacred, arise in modern society; Durkheim, however, emphasizes on society and social integrity over individuals’ reckless liberty. Thus, Durkheim was interested in social change from a historical-comparative perspective and his unit of analysis was ‘social group’ instead of individuals.

### 3. Social Solidarity—Mechanical and Organic

Durkheim studies society from functionalist point of view, which suggests that social facts produce and facilitate social solidarity. He examines different social facts, such as division of labor, religion, and suicide, and concludes that harmony rather than conflict (as referred to Marx) defines society. In his first major work, *The Division of Labor in Society*, which was first published in 1893, Durkheim (1984) classifies society into two types—pre-modern and modern with a unique analysis of social solidarity. He argues that mechanical solidarity defines the pre-modern society, while organic solidarity does so the modern society. By mechanical solidarity he refers to integration that is based on shared beliefs and sentiments what he calls ‘*conscience collective*’ or common consciousness grounded in resemblance and in collective ritual [in Durkheim’s (1984) language: “every consciousness beats as one” (p. 106)]. Durkheim also argues that societies based on mechanical solidarity consist of relatively a small number of populations and are organized around kinship affiliations. Shared values and common sentiments regulate social relations. Therefore, regulation becomes primarily punitive. Violations of social norms are considered a direct threat to the shared identity, and so reactions to deviance tend to emphasize punishment (Shortell 2006). Mechanical solidarity is rooted in resemblances what Reedy calls ‘ascriptive’ similarities—“primordial and given attachments, such as gender, kinship, tribe, ethnicity and nation” (Reedy 2003: 95). Similar norms and behaviors practiced by members of a community resulting from not just a sense of natural unity, but also from coercive regulation of social relations that all bind them together and thus protect the society from being collapsed. Durkheim points that social institutions such as family, religion, and so forth produce shared norms and values which are to be mandatorily observed by members of the given society that eventually leads to the integration of society.

In contrast, organic solidarity, as Durkheim notes, refers to integration that emanates from specialization and mutual dependence. With the increase of population and interactions amongst members force mechanical solidarity of society to get diminished and also replaced by organic solidarity based on complex interdependence and cooperation—the very characteristics of modern industrial society. While a little differentiation of labor remains in pre-modern society and it hardly affects to form common consciousness, society becomes larger and division of labor increases in modern society. However, Durkheim argues that the increased differentiations do not affect social harmony and lead to disintegration, rather shared values fades away, and organic solidarity occupies that position. Expansion of society creates expansion of division of labor and eventually gives rise to complex interdependence. The sense that ‘everyone needs everyone’—as one does no longer produces all things, which one needs—results in large-scale interdependence that forms organic solidarity and keeps society in order. So, where resemblances produce common consciousness and thus form mechanical solidarity in pre-modern society, differentiations constitute organic solidarity through complex interdependence in modern society. Durkheim’s political sociology is important to understand organic solidarity in modern society. He argues that occupational organizations which are also economic and political organizations arrange societies of organic solidarity, and their legal systems regulate behavior based on principles of exchange and restitution, rather than punishment (Shortell 2006). It is worth mentioning that Durkheim treats mechanical and organic solidarity as the extreme ends of a continuum; a society can have elements of both types (American society too; the conversations between Sophia and President Obama tell so), but organic solidarity becomes predominant as the division of labor plays an increasing social role (Whalen 2007: 405).

Durkheim also mentions a third form of solidarity—contractual solidarity—which he attributes to the work of Herbert Spencer. But he is not in agreement with this view as he believes that only contracts cannot offer sufficient social integration (Whalen 2007: 405). Robert N. Bellah (1973) in *Emile Durkheim: On Morality and Society*, thus writes: “For Durkheim, what is essential in organic solidarity is not contract but the moral basis of contract or the ‘non-contractual elements’ in the contract. If contract were simply a temporary truce between conflicting interests, and subject to every pressure a stronger party could enforce, it would provide far too capricious a foundation for a society based on the division of labor. A stable form of organic solidarity requires an institutionalized system of enforcing good faith and avoidance of force and fraud in contract. It requires, in a word, justice” (p. xxv).

For Durkheim, the transformation of society is a gradual process in which old laws are supplanted by new ones

smoothly. In Muller's words, "Normally, Durkheim assumes, rules develop spontaneously in the course of social intercourse, as part of a gradual process of habitualization in which the exchange is first regulated provisionally, then as a habit and last of all legally" (Muller 1993: 98). Thus, routinization of organic solidarity is a normal course of society that arises from functional interdependencies of various societal bodies that in turn relies on 'time' and 'continuous contact' among them (Muller 1993:98).

Durkheim is not unaware of the conditions (that hamper social stability) which emerge from rapid social change paced by the industrial revolution. He acknowledges the fact and argues that contractual solidarity, indeed, generates two pathological forms of division of labor—anomic and forced/egoistic. "The anomic form results from a lack of regulation of the social relations involved in the division of labor. The result is undue conflict between different groups and a loss of a sense of the meaning of the individual's contribution to a larger whole. The forced form results when stronger contracting parties use unjust (coercive) means to enforce their will on weaker parties" (Bellah 1973: xxvii). Anomic situation is a temporary crisis originated from social transformation. It is a crisis of adaptation, and not a fundamental crisis of the system. Durkheim believes that "continuous contact will eventually produce new rules and a new functional equilibrium between the divided functions, thus assuring social integration (Muller 1993: 98).

Durkheim's organic solidarity is understood by Reedy (2003) as 'consensual' and "characterized by equality between members" (p. 96). Durkheim thus emphasizes on the egalitarian philosophy to avert anomic or forced form of division of labor, when he asserts that organic solidarity involves in agreement in which "the values exchanged are really equivalent; and, for this to be so, it is necessary for traders to be placed in conditions externally equal." Moreover, "true individual liberty does not consist in suppression of all regulation, but it is the product of regulation, for this equality is not in nature" (Quoted by Whalen 2007: 406). A Society of organic solidarity, thus, employs regulations upon its members that offer all equal freedom from coercions and empower them to work on the basis of mutual consensus.

Earlier, Durkheim conceives that modern society does not need shared values derived from religion or other institutions for social cohesion found in pre-modern society. However, we find in later-Durkheim a sort of deviation. In his later-life, Durkheim does realize that "modern society needs to develop new means of reinforcing social norms and a shared sense of affiliation" (Shortell 2006). New religions and new gods [Durkheim equates religion with law, morality, art, science, political forms. He argues that in the beginning everything was religious (Palumbo and Scott 2003)] are necessary for organic solidarity bred by division of labor in modern society.

#### **4. American Society and Durkheimian Analysis**

Sophia Bailey Klugh is the adopted daughter of a gay-couple—Jonathan Bailey and Trinton Klugh—in San Diego, California. In her first letter to President Obama, Sophia invited the President to a dinner. However, she did not get any response from him. Later, Sophia wrote her second letter to her president which was posted on Facebook by one of her fathers—Jonathan Bailey—on 28 October 2012 (23abc 2012). Sophia's second letter, which is the concern for our discussion, reveals an anomic condition of the twenty-first-century American society. Sophia faces social stigma and becomes agonized when her friends at school tease her about her gay fathers, albeit she is, in family life, happy with them. America is a highly industrialized nation and its society is marked by complex interdependence. Yet, traditional values and religious norms are dominant in it. Religious conservatism that opposes gayism largely affects American society. On the other hand, Obama's letter that reinforces the principles of freedom and equality tries to overcome its pathological condition from Durkheimian viewpoints. Let us first have some brief reflections on American socio-political conservatism and the historical-comparative account of same-sex marriage.

##### **4.1 Socio-Political Conservatism**

On 4 July 1776, the United States declared independence from the Kingdom of Great Britain. On 17 September 1787, the country's constitution was adopted which went into effect on 4 March 1789 (Rodgers 2011: 109). Earlier Thomas Jefferson, one of the chief architects and later President of America, drafted the American Declaration of Independence (1776). The Declaration begins in this way— "we hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their creator, with certain inalienable rights, that these are the life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" that states the ideals of the American nation on which its social and political foundations have been built. The founding fathers of the United States, such as George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin and Alexander Hamilton were deeply influenced by the European secular social and political ideas that led to the evolvment and acceleration of the eighteenth-century European Enlightenment Movement, and accordingly they shaped the social and political landscapes of the country in conformity with the modern ideas and philosophy. However, they were also aware of the social reality that religion was a vital force in American society and thus God-consciousness was reflected even in the Declaration. America still upholds and respects traditional values not only in private but also in

public domain. For instance, the president of the United States is used to taking his oath by touching the Bible. The words “IN GOD WE TRUST” are inscribed on each US\$100 note. Recently in June 2009, President Obama gave a speech in Cairo, Egypt for the Muslim world. In the context of the president’s speech and his administration’s policies, Pew Forum conducts a survey amongst the American people which reveals that 20% of the nation’s populations believe that Obama is a Muslim (*The Washington Post*, 19 August 2010), and promptly this report arrests huge political attentions and turns to be a political currency for some groups, particularly the conservatives.<sup>1</sup> The following day, the White House clarifies the President’s religious identity, and reinforces that the President is a committed Christian and he prays regularly in the Christian manner (CNN; NDTV: 20 August 2010). Further, Prof. Timothy Stanley, a historian from Oxford University, while analyzing the 2012 American election, argues that the Republican candidate Romney’s religious background had an effect on the voting behavior and thus his defeat to Obama. He also notes that this is the first in history that a party did not include any Protestant as candidates for American Presidency and Vice Presidency.<sup>2</sup> These facts reveal that religious values or conservative sentiments significantly affect American politics and society.

Bi-party system, in which two political parties (for U. S., Democratic and Republican) usually dominate state politics, has developed in the U. S. over the years. Politically, both Democratic and Republican parties believe in similar ideology—capitalist democracy. However, from social perspective, the democrats are considered social-liberal and the republicans are branded as social-conservative. In the contemporary American society, social issues such as healthcare, abortion, immigration, marriage and family have become core agendas for politics and the politicians. The democrats tend to have liberal and supportive attitudes towards these issues, while the republicans are conservative in this regard.

#### 4.2 Same-Sex Marriage

Same-sex unions were never the dominant coupling pattern between two human beings; rather it was treated as a deviant form with a differing level of acceptance in society in the past. History of societal tolerance towards same-sex unions goes back to classical ancient civilizations of Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome (Random History 2011). In these civilizations, particular groups of men and women would maintain same-sex relationships ‘outside their heterosexual arrangement’ and those relationships were treated as ‘free expressions of love’ (Random History 2011). Later, with the emergence of traditional religions as a strong social force, and, in particular, with the advent of the Biblical religions, the practice of same-sex marriage came under severe criticisms and condemnations. For several thousand years, homosexual marriage was a taboo subject in the Western world. Only in the recent past, during the second-half of the twentieth century, the rise of an intense modernity—associated with high degree of industrialization, urbanization, individualism, complex division of labor, rapid progress in communication-technology, and scientific worldview—paved the way for freedom of same-sex sexuality. In response to a growing demand, Denmark was the first country to legalize same-sex unions in 1989, and up to mid-2011 ten countries legally recognized same-sex marriage (Chamie and Mirkin 2011: 531). In the United States, the first unsuccessful petition for “equal treatment to same-sex couples” was filed in 1971 with the Minnesota Supreme Court (Pfisterer and Wynn 2010: 3). Since then, through a long series of movements for decades, the first legal gay-marriage was celebrated in Massachusetts in 2004 (ProCon.org 2012). The following table shows the current status of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transsexual (LGBT) population and same-sex marriage in the U. S.

Table 1: Status of LGBT in the Unites States

Particulars	Value
Percentage of Americans who favor gay marriage	41%
Percent of Americans who oppose gay marriage	47%
Number of U. S. states where gay marriage is legal	13*
Number of U. S. states where gay marriage is banned	35*
Percent of U. S. adults who are LGBTs	3.5%

Source: *Statistic Brain 2012* \**Ahuja and Chow 2013*

#### 4.3 How Durkheim Makes Sense

The increase in U. S. population (multi-national and multi-racial) and phenomenal advancement in information-technology in late-twentieth century attach American people to a social system where dominant values are largely individualistic. The hyper-individualistic values in turn force the highly industrialized American society into a ‘moral crisis.’ Several groups of people are motivated by self-interests so deeply that they freely choose

<sup>1</sup> Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, a noted U. S. based research organization reveals that 78.4% of the total population of the United States belongs to Christian religion, out of which the Protestants are 51.3% and the Catholics share 23.9%. See: (<http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-chapter-1.pdf>).

<sup>2</sup> Mitt Romney belongs to Mormon community while his running-mate Paul Ryan is a Catholic (see Stanley 2012).

life-styles for their own without considering the dominant social norms and group-integrity at large. These groups favor alternative pattern of life-style such as same-sex marriage. On the other hand, the majority of the Americans are used to maintaining the status quo and societal integrity by showing their loyalties to age-old social institutions and values. This is evidenced in the fact that when Massachusetts adopted a pro-same-sex union law in 2004, 13 other states hurriedly amended their constitutions to ban gay-marriage (ProCon.org 2012). Heterosexual marriage is considered a 'functional prerequisite for society' since it is the only way to keep human reproduction up and prevent human society from eventual destruction. Without heterosexual bond between males and females, society will cease to exist. Thus, still today, heterosexual-coupling is the typical process of family-formation in the U. S. Most Americans regard 'marriage' as a bond between a male and a female, and in Durkheimian analysis, "the central values of a society regardless of secular or religious orientations are deemed sacrosanct by its members" (Muller 1993: 99). Monogamous family is still considered a sacred institution in America that "brings out an attitude of reverence, awe, and obligation" (Ritzer 2011: 205). So, any violation to that sacred norm is fundamentally opposed by the majority. Furthermore, heterosexuality is a 'social fact'—a 'way of acting' and capable of exercising on the individual an external constraint (Durkheim 1982: 13). American people, in general, feel some social obligations in terms of getting married to the opposite sexes, and they do not think of getting out of the familial bond. Male-female marriage is held 'ideal' by the Americans who are mostly Protestants (51.3%) and Roman Catholics (23.9%)—the religions which only permit heterosexual bond (Pew Forum 2012). The Catholics treat homosexuality as a 'troubling moral and social phenomenon' (Ratzinger and Amato 2003), and the Protestants refer homosexuality to 'a sinful lifestyle choice' (Ellison et al. 2011: 39). Biblical references are made to support heterosexuality and oppose homosexuality.<sup>3</sup>

The above discussion depicts the picture of Durkheimian concept of 'anomic' state of society. With the increased division of labor and individualistic ethics, modern capitalist societies are heading towards a state of 'deregulation' resulting from an imbalance between structural advancement and cultural progress in given society. New type of relations are emerging as expressions of certain groups' individualistic 'wills', but the social 'ideal' is not yet ready to accept the new patterns. Thus, within the existing advanced organic solidarity, the gap in between structure and culture leads people to a state of discontent and anomie.

Little girl Sophia's letter reveals an anomic situation in American society with regard to same-sex marriage. Sophia's school friends presumably come from traditional 'ideal' families, while she is from an 'atypical' one. Their socialization in family varies. Thus, Sophia's friends' tease reflects the American society's current pathological condition. From a Durkheimian point of view, solution to this problem lies in creating a professional mediating group who will coordinate between different social groups that hold differing values and interests. Time also works as a contributory factor to the way-out. We mentioned earlier that normalization takes place spontaneously through three stages—provisional regularization, habitualization, and legalization. American society is currently passing through a transitional anomic phase, "the 'cure' lies not in a radical transformation, but in subjecting [new] social relations to planned social change" (Muller 1993: 99). Time and continuous contact between 'will' and 'ideal' will bring out expected normalcy in the U. S. society.

On the other hand, President Obama's response fits into Durkheimian theory of state and democracy. Muller summarizes Durkheim's concept of state and democracy: For Durkheim, state— i) is a mechanical product of social differentiation; ii) is an independent central body; iii) is a decision-making centre. Its primary duty is to create regulating norms and 'collective conscience' in modern society, not to execute those; iv) is the representation of sovereign power that serves as an 'organ of social thought'. In other words, state represents a 'collective will'; v) consists of a group of *sui generis* officials; vi) performs both controlling and integrative functions. It regulates and binds society. (Muller 1993: 101-102). Durkheim outlines the features of a democratic society: i) State is the supreme guardian of individualistic collective ideal; ii) Professional organizations serve as the regulating bodies of economics and politics; iii) A rational system of socialization and education serves as the way of development of autonomous personalities; iv) Instead of aggressive nationalism, it advocates peaceful patriotism; v) It combines two properties of 'balance of power' and 'communication'; vi) It minimizes pathological developments within the State like collective particularism and state tyranny (Muller 1993: 102-105).

Obama holds the presidency of the United States, what Durkheim terms "the top position among *sui generis*

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<sup>3</sup> Bible allows heterosexuality and prohibits homosexuality. God plans for heterosexuality, not homosexuality, as Bible says, "So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them"— Genesis 1: 27 (NKJV). God further says, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists will inherit the kingdom of God."—1 Corinthians 6: 9-10 (NKJV). Also see: Leviticus 18: 22; 20: 13.

officials”, and thus represents the American nation and American democracy simultaneously. As the leader of the nation, he tries to maintain the collective conscience and protect the individual rights of the U. S. citizens. In his letter to Sophia, he mainly stresses on social integrity while calling attention to unity in diversity. America is an immigrant nation, and diversity is a major characteristic of its society. In this context, for social solidarity in American society, Durkheim’s later views (modern society needs to develop new means of reinforcing social norms and values, new religion and new gods) are significant. America, from the very beginning, has proceeded towards this direction. The inscription that all men are created equal in the Declaration makes a sense of social justice and equality to be done to every citizen. In the same vein, President Obama reinforces the democratic norms and practices quintessential for the integration of American society. His words “our differences unite us. You and I are blessed to live in a country where we are born equal no matter what we look like on the outside, where we grow up, or who our parents are” embody the features of democracy—equality, rule of law, tolerance and justice, what can be considered as Durkheim’s understanding of new religions and new gods. This religion of social democracy has been a key to social solidarity at all ages in American society. The abolition of slavery (through the thirteenth amendment of the constitution) during Abraham Lincoln’s presidency, the movements for eliminating racial discriminations and especially establishing black people’s rights,<sup>4</sup> incorporation of democratic ideals in the Declaration, and Obama’s approach—are all linked to the quest for an egalitarian society which eventually leads to social integration. President Obama, at the same time, becomes respectful to Sophia’s fathers’ individualistic choice of same-sex union. To him, mutual respect and tolerance is the key to social order. He writes, “...what matters above all is the love we show one another.” The U. S. president focuses on a ‘rational system of socialization and education’ (in Durkheimian sense), when he advises Sophia to remind her friends at school about the Golden Rule—“to treat others the way you hope they will treat you.” Furthermore, by consoling Sophia with very soft and passionate words, President Obama tries to minimize any pathological development within any group of the U. S. citizens. Obama’s words can inject hope and enthusiasm into Sophia’s mind. Thus, his acts (of replying to Sophia) and words serve as a ‘binding force’ to bind the U. S. society together.

## 5. Conclusion

The letter-correspondence between little Sophia and President Barack Obama reveals two important facts from Durkheimian viewpoints— 1. The United States, a highly industrialized nation, is currently passing through a transitional period and experiencing a pathological form of division of labor—an anomic situation—in its society; and 2. President Obama, as the principal leader of the society, tries to minimize that pathological condition, and thus is keen to protect America’s social integrity. However, this explanation following Durkheim’s sociological theory might be problematic from real-politics and power-politics perspectives. The contents of both letters might be considered instrumental, that is to say, Sophia desperately needs strong social and emotional supports to tackle the stigma she faces, and Obama’s approach might be driven by his political interests—he needs LGBT supports in the U. S. presidential election which was held on 6 November 2012. Many may argue that Obama’s rhetorical voice in response to little Sophia’s emotional queries is an electoral maneuvering to bag the gay-people’s votes. Just five days before the election, President Obama could use Sophia’s letter as a trump card to win the game of electoral politics. An opinion poll in late-October 2012 suggested that 72% of American LGBT voters would back Obama’s reelection (Withers 2012). That very fact could guide Obama to respond to Sophia in a positive manner for furthering LGBT-supports to his favor. Indeed, President Obama, as election result reveals, polled 90% of the gay-people’s votes that made a remarkable contribution for his winning the White House (Morgan 2012). However, it is fair to say that political interests cannot be divorced from political functioning/activities. Political interests might be an immediate object, not an ultimate goal for governing elites, and, in the same token, for Obama as well. The primary goal of the U. S. president, as we believe, is to conserve social solidarity of the modern American society that is passing through a transition reflecting a kind of social crack/anomie. Obama’s support to homosexual wedding echoes the effort to repair that crack of the twenty-first-century American society by underlining the importance of democratic norms and practices that respect for individual rights and choices.

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<sup>4</sup> Civil rights movements, in particular, the role of Martin Luther King, Jr. (See his famous speech ‘I have a dream’) and Malcolm X can be cited as examples.

Appendix 1  
**Sophia's Letter to Obama**

Dear Barack Obama,

It's Sophia Bailey Klugh, your friend, who invited you to dinner. You don't remember, okay that's fine. But I just wanted to tell you that I am so glad you agree that two men can love each other, because I have two dads and they love each other. But at school kids think that it's gross and weird. But it really hurts my heart and feelings. So I come to you because you are my hero. If you were me and you had two dads that love each other, and kids at school teased you about it, what would you do? Please respond!

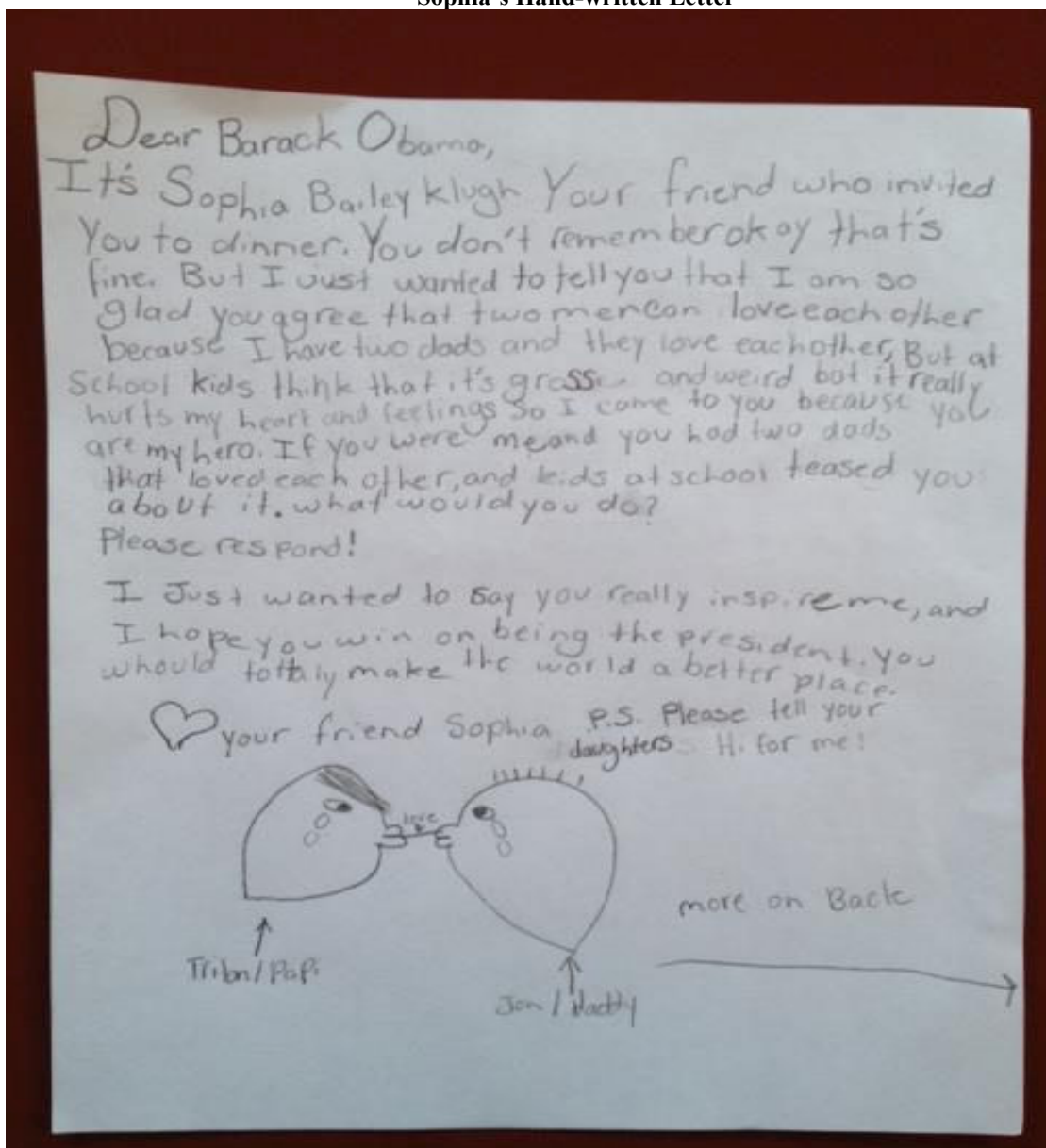
I just wanted to say you really inspire me, and I hope you win on being the president. You would totally make the world a better place.

Please tell your daughters Hi for me!

Your friend,

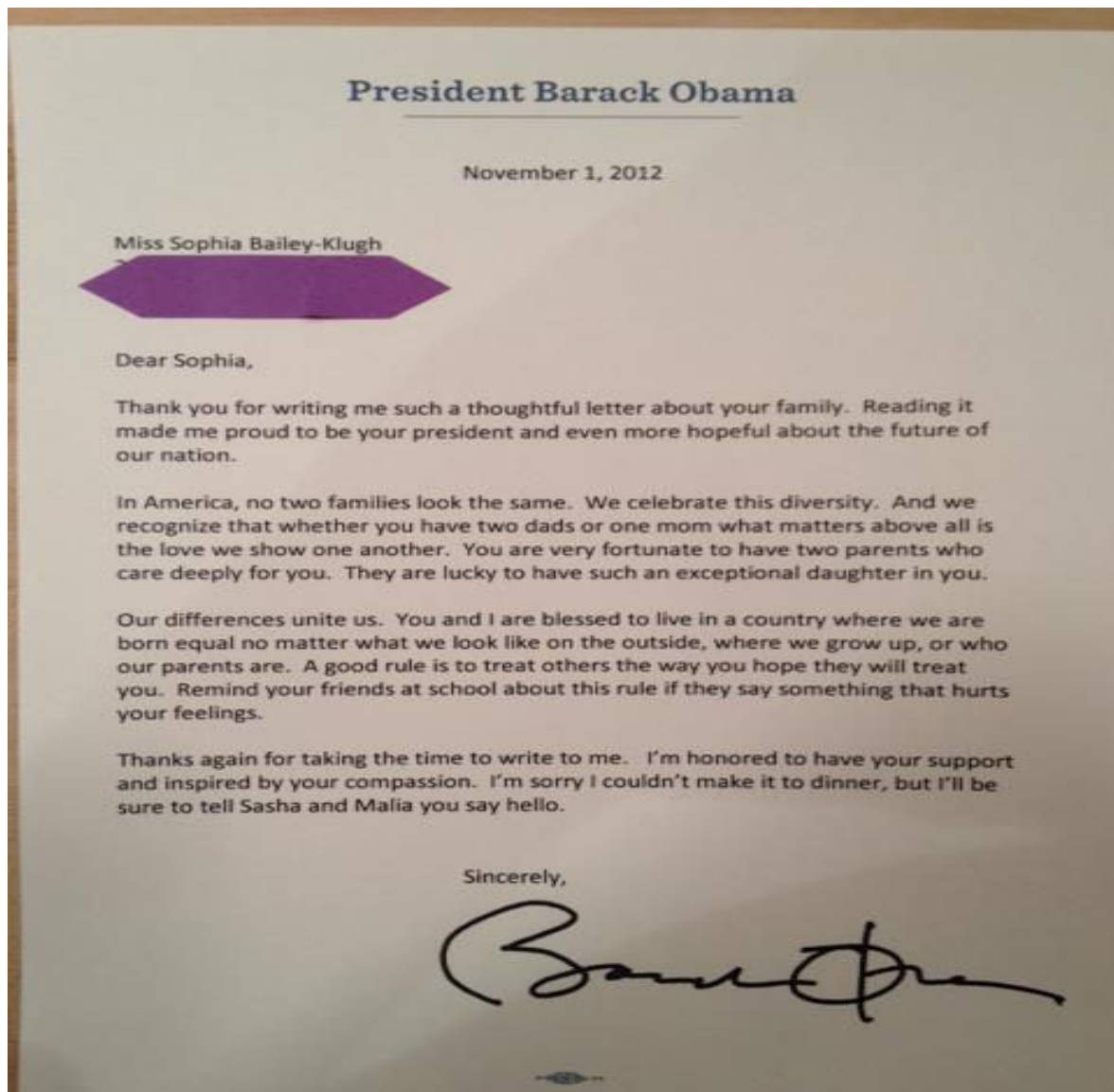
Sophia.

**Sophia's Hand-written Letter**



**Source:** McGonnigal, J. 2013. "Sophia Bailey Klugh, 10-Year-Old Girl with Gay Dads, Has an Important Question for President Obama." Available from: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-mcgonnigal/sophia-bailey-klugh-letter-to-president-obama\\_b\\_2036499.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-mcgonnigal/sophia-bailey-klugh-letter-to-president-obama_b_2036499.html) [Retrieved: 13 August 2013].

Appendix 2  
**Obama's Response to Sophia**



**Source:** McGonnigal, J. 2013. "Obama Responds to 10-Year-Old's Heartfelt Letter About Her Dads." Available from: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-mcgonnigal/obama-responds-to-10-year-olds-heartfelt-letter-about-her-dads\\_b\\_2074213.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jamie-mcgonnigal/obama-responds-to-10-year-olds-heartfelt-letter-about-her-dads_b_2074213.html) [Retrieved: 13 August 2013].

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