
SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN A DIVERSE AND COMPLEX WORLD: THE ROLE OF RELIGION, CONSERVATISM, AND INTERSECTIONALITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about how religion and conservatism affect same-sex marriage. It looks at two sides of the story: the side of religious conservatives who are against same-sex marriage, and the side of same-sex couples who have to deal with different problems and opportunities in their lives. The paper shows how religious ideas and values, and religious people and groups, make conservatives think and act in certain ways about same-sex marriage, and how they change what people and governments think and do about this issue. The paper also explores how the conservative idea of marriage meets different kinds of religions in different places and situations. Moreover, the paper uses the idea of intersectionality to show how many things that are connected, like gender, sexuality, race, class, religion, and culture, shape how same-sex couples and their families live and what happens to them. The paper talks about the legal and political fights and challenges, the social and economic difficulties and strengths, and the love, identity, and family life and roles of same-sex couples.

Keywords: Same-Sex Marriage, Conservatism, Religion, Intersectionality, Gender

INTRODUCTION

When two people who identify as the same legal sex or gender are married, it's known as a same-sex marriage. In most nations across the world, same-sex marriage is governed by law, custom, and religion; legal and societal reactions to this have ranged from jubilation to criminalization. Since same-sex marriage impacts the rights and recognition of millions of people and their families, it is one of the most contentious and polarizing issues in the world today. There exists a disparity between the legal and social reality of same-sex marriage in different nations and regions. While some, like Canada, Spain, and South Africa, have legalized and acknowledged it, others, like China, Russia, and Nigeria, have prohibited and rejected it. Furthermore, because it encompasses a variety of ideas, values, and conventions that influence people's attitudes and behaviors toward it, same-sex marriage is not just an issue of law and politics but also religion and culture. A system of values and customs known as religion pertains to a transcendent or sacred reality and frequently directs the ethical and social conduct of people and societies. A group of people or a society's shared symbols, meanings, and customs are what make up their culture. Religion and culture have the power to shape people's perspectives on marriage, sexuality, and the family as well as their reactions to same-sex unions and their ramifications.

RELIGIOSITY, CONSERVATISM, AND OPPOSITION TO SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

India is often denoted for its rich culture; thus, religion plays an integral role in the lives of its citizens. Religion is an area not even a single soul on this land is void of because religion is that area that marks our environment and discipline, which we grow in from childhood to the society in the future we live in. Religion serves as the root for us to perceive the world and people around us in the way it asks us to behave under some certain set of codes and regulations termed as good and bad in every religion. Many people follow what their religion teaches and thus judge a situation based on what their religion claims are right or wrong. Joshi and Oinam in 2019 conducted research that showed religious people in India usually think that homosexuality is wrong, and they don't want same-sex marriages to happen.¹ Arguments opposing same-sex marriage are often made on religious grounds. Although the relationship between religiosity and opposition to same-sex marriage has been noted often in mainstream

¹ Vishal Kumar, just world belief, religiosity, and attitudes towards homosexuality: a study of Indian engineering students, *Current Psychology* (2019)

media and academic outlets, the question of why people oppose same-sex marriage has not been adequately addressed at the level of social, personality, and political psychology. It has been investigated that religious opposition to same-sex marriage has ideological roots in the desire to maintain the societal status quo.² Some people even claim that homosexuality goes against **their God's original plan**. The main reason for this **discrepancy** lies in two **spheres**:

A. Subjective interpretation with objective implementation on diverse groups of people

Religious texts are generally written in a way that interpretations remain 'Open-ended' for the reader and the same can be applied according to the circumstance the individual might be facing.³

B. Lack of reliable Data and religious sources

The religious texts we ought to prefer and infer have undergone various transmissions through various cultures and diverse people having different mindsets thus making the synoptic referring of these texts unreliable. "Durkheim with Data: The Database of Religious History" by Edward Slingerland and Brenton Sullivan also affirmed the hypotheses that religious texts change over time and space.⁴

INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND VALUES ON CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION TO SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

The idea that marriage is a holy institution established by God and founded on the complementarity of man and woman is one of the key elements influencing conservative opinions on same-sex unions. Many conservatives consider same-sex marriage to be a danger to the moral fabric of society and the divine order, and they view homosexuality as evil and unnatural. In a Pew Research Centre survey, 74% of white evangelical Protestants and 62% of black Protestants are against same-sex marriage, while only 28% and 40% of them are in Favor of it, respectively.⁵ The propensity to defend and uphold the current social structure and oppose change that would upset the status quo is another element influencing conservative views on same-sex marriage. A significant number of conservatives place a high importance on stability,

² Gordan Albert Babst, *Moral Argument, Religion, and Same-Sex Marriage: Advancing the Public Good* (2009)

³ Kent Greenawalt, *Legal Interpretation: Perspectives from Other Disciplines and Private Texts*, (2010)

⁴ Edward Slingerland, Brenton Sullivan, *Durkheim with Data: The Database of Religious History* (2017)

⁵ Pew Research Centre, *Religion and Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage*, Pew Research Centre (2012)

tradition, and authority. They view same-sex marriage as a radical and disruptive innovation that challenges established norms and beliefs. In contrast to 26% of Americans who score highly on system justification, 68% of those who score low on same-sex marriage oppose it, according to PRRI research.⁶ A third element that acts as a mediator in the correlation between religiosity, conservatism, and opposition to same-sex marriage is the degree of moral underpinnings and sexual prejudice. The term "sexual prejudice" describes unfavourable sentiments and views toward individuals who act in a same-sex manner, whereas "moral foundations" refers to the fundamental aspects of morality that influence people's decisions and behaviours. Studies have indicated that religious conservatives are more inclined to reject same-sex marriage as immoral and unnatural because they have larger moral concerns about purity, sanctity, and loyalty as well as higher degrees of sexual discrimination.⁷

Attitudes on Same-sex Marriage
by Religious Affiliation and Denominational Family

	Strongly favor	Favor	Oppose	Strongly oppose	Don't Know/ Refused	N
Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose or strongly oppose allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally?						
All Americans	25	29	18	20	8=100	40,571
White evangelical Protestant	10	18	27	39	6=100	7,938
White evangelical Baptists	8	15	28	44	5=100	2,934
White evangelical Methodists	11	20	30	32	6=100	888
White evangelical Lutherans	16	29	23	25	7=100	574
White evangelical Presbyterians	10	29	26	29	6=100	372
White evangelical Church of Christ/DOC	8	18	25	44	5=100	401
White mainline Protestant	28	34	16	14	8=100	5,981
White mainline Baptists	20	33	18	21	7=100	798
White mainline Methodists	30	37	15	10	8=100	1,178
White mainline Lutherans	29	35	18	11	7=100	986
White mainline Presbyterians	31	38	15	9	7=100	607
White mainline Church of Christ/DOC	21	29	19	20	11=100	246
White Episcopalian	33	35	15	10	8=100	601
White Congregational/UCC	34	34	17	8	7=100	303
Black Protestant	13	25	24	30	9=100	3,913
Hispanic Protestant	13	22	30	28	7=100	1,198
Other non-white Protestant	16	25	20	27	11=100	990
Unitarian/Universalist*	74	20	2	4	0=100	90
Mormon	8	19	28	40	6=100	688
Jehovah's Witness	6	6	31	44	12=100	275
Catholic	23	37	17	13	9=100	8,529
White Catholic	26	35	17	14	8=100	5,628
Hispanic Catholic	18	42	18	13	10=100	2,236
Other non-white Catholic	26	34	16	16	9=100	665
Orthodox Christian	24	32	15	20	8=100	230
Jewish	47	30	9	9	5=100	724
Muslim	21	21	18	33	7=100	297
Buddhist	48	36	6	8	2=100	241
Hindu	19	36	18	12	14=100	204
Other religion	52	23	8	9	8=100	323
Unaffiliated	45	32	10	8	6=100	8,008

* Sample size is less than 100. Results should be interpreted with caution.
Source: PRRI, American Values Atlas, 2014

⁶ Rebecca Rose Varghese, Data Point: Situating the debate on same-sex marriage, The Hindu (2023)

⁷ Robert P. Jones, Attitudes on Same-sex Marriage by Religious Affiliation and Denominational Family (2015)

IMPACT OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS AND LEADERS ON PUBLIC OPINION AND POLICY

Official stances and teachings on the subject are among the ways religious leaders and organizations influence public opinion and legislation on same-sex marriage. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, for instance, opposes same-sex unions because they go against both the divine vision for marriage and natural law. As a matter of compassion and human dignity, on the other hand, several Buddhist and Jewish groups support same-sex marriage. According to these official stances and teachings, followers and members may develop certain attitudes and behaviors⁸, and the public conversation and debate surrounding the matter may also be impacted. Through the mobilization of their networks and resources to support or oppose same-sex marriage, religious leaders and groups can also influence public opinion and legislation. For example, different states and nations, like California, Ireland, and Taiwan, have seen campaigns by religious leaders and groups in favor of or against same-sex marriage petitions and referendums.⁹ In addition, they have advocated for and against laws and decisions that impact same-sex couple's rights and legal standing, such as the Défense of Marriage Act and the Obergefell v. Hodges verdict in the United States.¹⁰ Along with the social and cultural context of the issue, these activities may have a major effect on its political and legal ramifications.¹¹

CONSERVATIVE VIEW OF MARRIAGE AND ITS ENCOUNTERS WITH RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY AND PLURALISM

According to the conservative perspective, marriage is a holy and exclusive relationship between a single man and a single woman that is based on natural law and is ordained by God. The belief that heterosexual marriage is the ideal and standard form of family life is frequently linked to religious traditions including Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. This viewpoint holds that marriage fulfils the goals of procreation, companionship, and social order. It is also a moral requirement and a social duty. But, by offering different and alternative viewpoints on marriage

⁸ Supra Note 6

⁹ Suen, Y., Wong, E.M.Y. & Chan, R.C. Relationship between Religion and Public Attitudes toward Same-Sex Marriage: Examining the Role of Traditional Chinese Religions through a Case Study of Hong Kong. *Sex Res Soc Policy* 21, 86–96 (2024)

¹⁰ Laura R. Olson, Wendy Cadge, James T. Harrison, Religion and Public Opinion about Same-Sex Marriage 340-360 (87th Ed., 2006)

¹¹ Perry, S. L., Whitehead, A. L., Religion and public opinion toward same-sex relations, marriage, and adoption: Does the type of practice matter? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 55(3), 637–651 (2016)

and family, religious pluralism and diversity pose a threat to the traditional understanding of marriage. Some religious groups, like the Sikhs, Jains, and Buddhists, for instance, view marriage as a contractual agreement that is secular and subject to modification or dissolution by the requirements and desires of the individual rather than as a divine institution. Certain religious communities, like Unitarians, Quakers, and Bahá'ís, agree that all kinds of love and partnership are equal and diverse, and they embrace same-sex marriage as a matter of human rights and dignity. Furthermore, several religious communities—like Muslims, Mormons, and Hindus—practice or recognize polygamy as a good and acceptable kind of marriage that permits more flexibility.¹²

INTERSECTIONALITY AND SAME-SEX COUPLES

The notion of intersectionality looks at how various oppressions and social identities interact to shape people's experiences and results. Couples of the same sex are one group that deals with a variety of interrelated issues because of their gender, sexual orientation, race, class, religion, and culture. Discrimination and stigma against same-sex couples come from a variety of places, including the media, the legal system, the medical system, religious institutions, and the general population. The respect, rights, and general well-being of same-sex couples and their families may suffer as a result of these kinds of discrimination and stigma.¹³ For example, research has indicated that couples who are same-sex suffer from higher levels of stress, anxiety, despair, and suicidal thoughts¹⁴ than couples who are different-sex, in part because of the institutional and social constraints they face¹⁵. Furthermore, certain same-sex couples are not allowed to receive the same legal protections and benefits as married couples or couples of different sexes, including health insurance, inheritance, adoption, and marriage.¹⁶

LEGAL AND POLITICAL STRUGGLES AND RESISTANCE OF SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THEIR CHILDREN

Legal and political obstacles are numerous for same-sex spouses and their offspring in various nations and areas. Same-sex couples may not be able to take advantage of the same rights and

¹² Vibha Chaturvedi, *Philosophy of Religion* (Chitralkha Manohar, 2019)

¹³ Intersectionality in the LGBTQIA Community, *Icma.Org* (2019)

¹⁴ Shuai Chen, *In sickness and in health: The mental health effects of same-sex marriage legalisation*, CEPR (2021)

¹⁵ Jennifer Kates, *Health and Access to Care and Coverage for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Individuals in the U.S.*, 8539-06 (2018)

¹⁶ Saif Rasul Khan, *Same-Sex Relationships and Marriages in India: The Path Forward* (2021)

advantages as opposite-sex couples in some locales, including parental authority, health insurance, inheritance, and adoption. To illustrate, in India, the government has opposed legalizing same-sex marriage, citing cultural and ethical objections, while just 19% of citizens approve of it. LGBTQ+ rights are being attacked by conservative administrations in Poland and Hungary, where same-sex marriage is also prohibited.¹⁷

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHALLENGES AND RESILIENCE OF SAME-SEX COUPLES AND THEIR HOUSEHOLDS

Varied nations and areas present varied social and economic barriers to same-sex spouses and their households. Discrimination, stigma, violence, poverty, and a lack of legal protection and acknowledgment are a few of these issues. For instance, a Williams Institute¹⁸ analysis states that same-sex couples in the United States, particularly those who belong to racial and ethnic minorities, have higher rates of poverty and lower median wages than opposite-sex couples. Another illustration is the fact that same-sex couples' rights and advantages are restricted in many parts of the world since they are not permitted to marry, adopt children, or inherit property from their partners.¹⁹

RELATIONSHIP, IDENTITY, AND FAMILY FORMATION AND CONTRIBUTION OF SAME-SEX COUPLES

Adopting, fostering, marrying, cohabiting, and having biological children are a few ways that same-sex couples create families. In 2019, over one million same-sex couples lived together in the United States; over 60% of these couples were married. Furthermore, raising biological, adopted, or fostered children accounted for roughly 21% of same-sex couples.²⁰

CONCLUSION

From two perspectives, it may be deduced that religion, conservatism, and same-sex marriage are related: those of religious conservatives who oppose same-sex marriage, and those of same-sex couples who face various challenges and opportunities in life. Religion and religious people

¹⁷ How India's Supreme Court Could Make Same-Sex Marriage Legal, TIME (2023)

¹⁸ Lauren Bauer, Veronica Clevestine, and Moriah Macklin, Examining the economic status of same-gender relationship households, brookings.edu (2022)

¹⁹ Debra Umberson, Mieke Beth Thomeer, Rhiannon A. Kroeger, Amy C. Lodge, Minle Xu, Journal of Marriage and Family, Vol. 77, No. 1 (2015)

²⁰ Sneha Gubbala, William Miner, Across Asia, views of same-sex marriage vary widely (2023)

greatly influence the thoughts and actions of conservatives about same-sex marriage, as well as the opinions and actions of the general public and government. In addition to politics and legislation, same-sex marriage also involves society and the economy and how they impact the security and well-being of same-sex couples and their families. Same-sex couples vary and are powerful in how they create and maintain their identities, families, and relationships; they are not all the same or weak. The concept of intersectionality has been used to examine how various factors such as gender, sexual orientation, color, class, religion, and culture contribute to the unique and challenging lives of same-sex couples and their families. Society urgently needs to create and enhance laws and policies that uphold the dignity and rights of same-sex couples and their families.