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# What Influences Opposition to Gay Marriage?

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## Introduction to Research

- This study explores what variables explain opposition to gay marriage, including religiosity, religious denomination and race.
- Religiosity is generally positively correlated with opposition to gay rights and to other minority activist movements.
  - However, when right-wing authoritarianism as an ideology is controlled for, support for gay rights increases. This would seem to suggest that political ideology is a better predictor of political support than religiosity.
- The mainstream gay rights movement is very present in the mainstream media through its whiteness.
  - However, studies show that queer women of color are much more likely to be politically active and mobilized in terms of fighting for their rights.
  - Researchers theorize that this might be a direct impact of the overrepresentation of whiteness in the mainstream. Queer women of color might feel more like they have to advocate for their own rights.
- Difference Between Religious Denominations
  - Evangelical Protestants and Catholics tend to be the most fervent in their opposition to gay rights. Black Protestants tended to also be fervently opposed, but this had more to do with evangelical denominations than race/ethnicity.
  - With all other religions, there appeared to be no significant correlation between denomination and support for gay rights with the exception of atheists who tended to be more supportive.

## Implications for Research

- Religiosity and political affiliation are strongly correlated. By examining religiosity, we can determine the political beliefs of individuals and how it relates to support for gay marriage.
- Race affects support for gay rights, but the implications are different for queer people of color and heterosexual people of color.
- The difference between religious denominations in their support for gay rights is essentially negligible. Evangelicalism, which can be connected to religiosity, has more of an impact.

## Hypotheses:

- H 1: The more times someone attends religious services, the more likely they are to oppose gay marriage.
- H 2: There is likely to be no correlation between religious denomination and opposition to gay marriage with the exception of atheism.
- H 3: There is likely to be no correlation between race/ethnicity and opposition to gay marriage.

## Data

### H 1: Religiosity

- 15.12% of those who attend religious services once a week believe that gay marriage should be legalized.
- 35.4% of the same group believe in civil unions but not marriage.
- 47.7% of the same group don't believe in any legal protections for gay/lesbian couples.
- 43.2% of those who attend religious services only a few times a year believe in the legalization of gay marriage.
- 35.68% of the same group believe in civil unions but not marriage.
- 19.43% of the same group believe in no legal recognition.

### H 3: Race/Ethnicity

- 41.13% of all white respondents believed in gay marriage.
- 33.58% of all white respondents supported civil unions but not gay marriage.
- 24.39% of all white respondents didn't support any legal recognition for gay couples.
- 33.92% of all black respondents supported gay marriage.
- 33.83% of all black respondents supported civil unions but not gay marriage.
- 29.77% of all black respondents did not support any legal recognition.

### H 2: Religious Denomination

This question was tricky to answer because of the perils of self-identification. Those who identified as "progressive" on the survey might be considered conservative by another sect's measurements. Surprisingly, almost 2/3 of those who considered themselves "non-traditional" believers opposed gay marriage while those who considered themselves progressive were split about 50/50. For atheists, agnostics and "spiritual but not religious", the data was clear. Gay marriage was overwhelmingly favored by all three categories. What's most interesting is that people who identify themselves as "non-traditional" are the most opposed to gay marriage. This may stem from a persecution complex. Because of the increased visibility of gay rights in the media, religious people who view themselves this way might think themselves as part of a shrinking minority as opposed to the majority.



## Findings

- H 1: Religiosity  
The findings supported my hypothesis. Those who go to church more frequently opposed gay marriage by a much wider margin.
- H 2: Religious Denomination  
I have to reject my hypothesis as there appears to be a great deal of intra-group variability that must be explored. Examining the socialization of various religious denominations and what leads one to identify as "progressive" and the other to identify as "non-traditional" must be examined and clearer parameters must be set.
- H 3: Race/Ethnicity  
The majority of white respondents supported gay marriage while much less didn't support legal recognition. Black respondents appeared to be evenly split on the issue though there were less respondents who didn't support any legal recognition but not by a significant margin. However, it should be noted that the pool of black respondents utilized by the ANES survey was 1/4 the pool of white respondents. Therefore, that data is much more likely to be less conclusive than for white respondents. Further research is necessary.

## Conclusions

- The connection between race/ethnicity and support for gay marriage must be further explored. There has been much coverage in the media over the lack of black support for gay marriage but as seen by the photo to the left, there are many important bridges that have been built between the two communities as well as internally by queer people of color.
- Religiosity remains a key explainer for opposition to gay marriage. More outreach to highly religious communities must be done if the gay rights movement is to be truly successful.
- More research must be done to examine the connection between religious denomination and opposition to gay marriage and how self-identification affects the data.

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