

ABSTRACT

Sacred Rites and Civil Rights: Religion's Effect on Attitudes toward Same-Sex Unions and the Perceived Cause of Homosexuality

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Same-sex unions have received a great deal of attention in public discourse and current scholarly research. The importance of religion and individuals' attributions of the cause of homosexuality on attitudes toward same-sex unions have been established. Using a novel data set (Baylor Religion Survey, 2007) this study investigates which demographic and religious variables are associated with views toward the cause of homosexuality as well as which demographic and religious variables are most strongly associated with views toward same-sex unions while accounting for attribution. While the findings in this study support previous research a more comprehensive account of religion's effect is provided due to a broader and more in-depth collection of religion measures. This includes religious belief, behavior, and affiliation's relation to the attribution variable, their cumulative and individualized effects when considering same-sex unions, as well as the varied effect of affiliation when comparing homosexual marriage to civil unions.

Sacred Rites and Civil Rights: Religion's Effect on Attitudes toward Same-Sex Unions
and the Perceived Cause of Homosexuality

by

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The topic of same-sex unions has been a key political issue for many Americans since the 2004 presidential elections. Consider that in 2008 alone New Hampshire passed legislation allowing for homosexual civil unions, California's Supreme Court ruled that homosexuals have the constitutional right to marry, Massachusetts' House and Senate allowed for same-sex marriages for out-of-state couples, and in the November elections voters in Arizona, Florida, and California all elected to amend their state constitutions to legally define marriage thus outlawing same-sex unions.

Considering all of the attention given to the legality and morality of same-sex unions the key follow-up question for social researchers is what determines individuals' views towards those unions. More specifically, who is most likely to support or oppose same-sex unions? Olson et al. (2006) concluded that when studying attitudes regarding same-sex unions religion variables outperform demographic variables. Attitudes toward homosexual marriage and civil unions are strongly associated with religious beliefs, behaviors, and affiliations. Also gaining support in its importance concerning same-sex unions is the perceived source of homosexuality (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2005, 2008, Wilcox and Norrander 2002). Americans tend to oppose same-sex unions to the extent that they believe homosexuals choose their orientation. In turn, individuals who believe that homosexuality is biologically determined are, on average, more accepting of same-sex unions.

Thus, both religion and the perceived source of homosexuality powerfully affect attitudes concerning homosexual marriage and civil unions. Regrettably, while Olson et al. (2006) employed a collection of religion measures achieving both breadth and depth, they were not able to account for individuals' attribution of the cause of homosexuality. The present study utilizes a collection of religion measures comparable to Olson et al. (2006) while also controlling for individuals' belief about the cause of homosexuality. Conversely, the Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) and Wilcox and Norrande (2002) studies accounted for attribution as well as various religious measures but their religion measures were not as extensive as Olson et al.'s (2006) and interestingly enough, despite the inclusion of the perceived cause variable, their religion measures still retained significance. Due to religion's persistent influence it is important to discover what is taking place in greater depth and breadth than previously allowed. Specifically, the present study will include religion measures that account for religious belief, behavior, and affiliation. Neither Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) nor Wilcox and Norrande (2002) were able to include religious belief in their studies. This study will do so. The religious affiliation measures in each of these studies also fall short of the current "state of the art" (Steensland et al. 2000). The current investigation will account for religious affiliation using the RELTRAD typology.

Therefore, to fill the voids of past research a wider range of religion variables was utilized to discover religions' effect on individuals' beliefs concerning the cause of homosexuality as well as attitudes toward same-sex unions. In this study past findings implying the strength of an individuals' belief of cause of homosexuality on attitudes toward same-sex unions is supported. Beyond this, a more complete explanation of the

effects of religion on the issue is provided. Namely, I find a persistent and pervasive influence of religious belief, behavior, and affiliation on attitudes toward the cause of homosexuality and same-sex unions.

Attribution of the Cause of Homosexuality

Whether individuals choose to be gay or are gay by disposition is essential in debates concerning their right to marry. At the crux of the argument is the controllability of homosexuality and if responsibility for the orientation can be attributed to the individual. Attribution theory was first proposed by Heider (1944, 1958) and later furthered by Weiner (1979, 1985). The theory holds that individuals work to predict and control their environment by attributing others' behaviors as the result of internal or external factors. Weiner introduced the idea of controllability to attribution theory in that behavior can be viewed as either uncontrollable or controllable. For those behaviors that are labeled controllable the person exhibiting the behavior can be held personally responsible. Those attributing personal responsibility to a certain individual or group tend to view them more negatively if the behavior in question is stigmatized in some way. A number of studies find support for attribution theory applied to obesity (Crocker et al. 1993, DeJong 1980), poverty (Griffin and Oheneba-Sakyi 1993, Zucker and Weiner 1993), and when comparing certain stigmas believed to be controllable (AIDS) versus uncontrollable (Alzheimer's) (Weiner et al. 1988).

Past research that investigated attitudes toward homosexuality supports attribution theory. Not surprisingly negative attitudes towards homosexuals were more prevalent among those who viewed homosexuality as controllable (Aguero et al. 1984,

VanderStoep and Green 1988, Whitely 1990). Later, Herek and Capitanio (1995) found that among white and African-American heterosexuals, those who believed homosexuality was “out of a person’s control” were more favorable towards homosexuals than those who believed homosexuality was the result of a choice. In fact, the authors concluded that “the single most important predictor of attitudes [towards homosexuals] was the attribution of choice to sexual orientation” (Herek and Capitanio, 1995:95). Herek (2002) and Sakalli (2002) provide further support for the importance of an individual’s attribution of cause in predicting general affect toward homosexuals.

Due to the support attribution theory received when predicting general attitudes toward homosexuals it is no surprise that attitudes concerning gay rights and same-sex unions are significantly associated with attributions as well. Research conducted by Wilcox and Wolpert (2000) reveals attributions’ impact on attitudes concerning the political issues homosexuals face. Tygart (2000) found a strong correlation between attribution and the willingness to grant homosexuals the right to marry or obtain civil unions. Attribution maintained significance in multivariate models as well. Wood and Bartkowski (2004) provided further evidence concerning the importance of attributions. In their study of Oklahoma City residents, those believing homosexuality to be the result of a choice were much less likely to support gay rights while individuals’ ascribing to a biological cause of homosexuality were much more likely to support gay rights. Believing sexual orientation is fixed at birth results in being more likely to approve marriage or domestic partner laws for gays (Wilcox and Norrandar 2002).

Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2005) revealed that support for homosexual marriage has increased over the past 30 years as more of the public regards homosexuality as an

innate characteristic. Those who viewed homosexuality as biologically caused were much more likely to support same-sex marriage compared to those who believed homosexuality was the result of environment or upbringing. In their latest study Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) continued to demonstrate the importance of attribution. The authors found that those viewing homosexuality as non-biological are much less likely to support same-sex unions. Haider-Markel and Joslyn concluded that “attributions” of the cause of an individual’s sexual orientation “are in fact the strongest predictor of support” for same-sex unions (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008:291), coinciding with Herek and Capitanio’s (1995) suggestion in their previous study.

Religion and Homosexuality

A great deal of research focuses on the intersection of religion and views concerning homosexuality. Type of denomination, religious tradition, rate of attendance, literal views of the Bible, and images of God all affect attitudes towards homosexuality. Specifically, Christians will on average be more negative in their views towards homosexuality compared to Jews and those reporting no religious preference (Greenberg and Bystryn 1982, Loftus 2001, Smith 1998). When attitudes over a 20 or 30 year period are compared, fewer conservative Christians report believing homosexuality is morally wrong today than in the past though (Greeley and Hout 2006, McConkey 2001). While still the most condemning of homosexual behavior, evangelical Christians as a group are becoming more tolerant in their views toward homosexuality.

A well-established area of research is the effect denominations have on adherent’s attitudes (Alston 1974, Beatty and Walter 1984, Cochran and Beeghley

1991, Finlay and Walther 2003, Gay and Ellison 1993, Greeley and Hout 2006, Herek 1988, Koch and Curry 2000, Olson and Cadge 2002, Rowatt et al. 2006, Smith 1998). Generally, more conservative denominations tend to contain individuals who believe homosexuality is immoral. Members of mainline or liberal denominations report being more open toward homosexuality (Loftus 2001, McConkey 2001). Attendance also affects attitudes regarding homosexuals (Beatty and Walter 1984, Froese et al. 2008, Herek 1988, Herek and Capitanio 1995, Larsen et al. 1980). As expected, those who have higher rates of attendance tend to view homosexuality as immoral. Religious beliefs also have an independent affect on attitudes toward morality issues. The more literally people view the Bible the more intolerant they become towards certain fringe groups including homosexuals (Froese et al. 2008). Also, as biblical literalism increases, believing homosexuality is always wrong increases as well (Bader and Froese 2005). In fact, religious individuals are selectively intolerant of homosexuals because they are perceived to be acting contrary to traditional religious teachings (Rowatt et al. forthcoming).

Another important measure of religious belief is how individuals view God. Views of God are also related to punitive ideology, church attendance, biblical literalism, and religious experiences (Bader and Froese 2005, Froese and Bader 2007, Nelsen et al. 1985, Unnever and Cullen 2006, Unnever et. al 2005, Unnever et. al 2006,). Not surprisingly, conceptions of God also influence political tolerance and political party (Bader and Froese 2005, Froese et al. 2008). Even across countries conceptions of God affect attitudes towards capital punishment, abortion, and sexual morality. Further, an engaged view of God is a stronger indicator of absolutist sex

attitudes than attendance (Froese and Bader 2008). Most importantly for this study though, Froese et al. (2008) found that images of God are persistently associated with the denial of civil rights for homosexual persons.

In addition to being significantly associated with views about homosexuals as well as their civil rights, religion is a strong predictor of attitudes regarding same-sex unions. Specifically, non-Protestants are more likely to be favorable towards homosexual civil unions and marriage (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008, Olson et al. 2006, Wilcox and Norrander 2002, Wood and Bartkowski 2004). Religiously active individuals are also less likely to agree with same-sex marriage and civil unions (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2005, 2008, Olson et al. 2006, Wilcox and Norrander 2002). These studies provide insight into the general effect of religion but none have been able to fully account for religious behavior, belief, and affiliation. In fact, no study has to date measured religious belief's effects on same-sex unions while accounting for attribution. Additionally, the present study utilizes the RELTRAD (Steensland et al. 2000) typology to examine the effects of religious affiliation. This measure of religious affiliation will allow for a more comprehensive view of affiliation's importance when measuring attitudes towards same-sex unions. The RELTRAD typology will be a significant improvement over the Protestant dummy variable or the Mainline, Catholic, Fundamentalist, unaffiliated typology used in prior research (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008, Wilcox and Norrander 2002, Wood and Bartkowski 2004).

It is safe to say that religion and attribution are both significantly associated with attitudes toward same-sex unions. Using a more comprehensive collection of religion measures, some of which have not previously been utilized, as well as being able to

account for beliefs concerning the cause of homosexuality, this study hopes to provide a more thorough description of religion's relationship with attitudes concerning homosexual marriage and civil unions.

CHAPTER TWO

Data and Methods

Data for this study were taken from the second wave (2007) of the Baylor Religion Survey (BRS). The 2007 BRS is a random, national sample of 1,648 U.S. citizens and was administered by the Gallup Organization and compares favorably to similar items on the General Social Survey (Bader, Mencken, and Froese, 2007). The BRS is ideal for this study because of its focus on gaining deeper insight into the religious beliefs, behaviors, and identities of the general public. This focus will allow for more breadth as well as depth in our understanding of religion's association with the attribution of homosexuality and same-sex unions.

Dependent Variables

The first dependent variable utilizes the question "People choose to be homosexuals" as the dependent variable. Respondents were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or were undecided concerning this statement. The strongly agree and agree responses were paired and a dichotomous variable was produced. Over the entire sample, 38.5% believe that homosexuals choose their orientation. The "choice" variable will also serve as an independent measure once attitudes toward same-sex marriage and civil unions are investigated. The second dependent variable of interest uses the question asking for the respondents' level of agreement with the statement, "Homosexuals should be allowed to marry." The strongly agree and agree responses were paired and a dichotomous variable was constructed with

32.2% of the sample agreeing with same-sex marriage. Likewise, the question “Homosexuals should be allowed civil unions” was similarly dichotomized with 53.8% of the sample agreeing with this statement.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Percent
Support Same-Sex Marriage	32.17
Support Same-Sex Civil Unions	52.83
Believe Homosexuals Choose Orientation	38.48
Attend Weekly	30.31
Biblical literalists	23.54
RELTRAD	
Evangelical Protestants	33.09
Black Protestants	4.79
Mainline Protestants	20.69
Catholic	22.14
Jewish	1.90
Other	6.06
No Religion	11.34
	<u>Mean (SD)</u>
Active God	27.07 (6.62)
Angry God	16.99 (6.39)

Source: Baylor Religion Survey (2007)

Religion Variables

The religious controls account for behavior (attendance), belief (biblical literalism and images of God), and affiliation (RELTRAD). To control for religious affiliation a modified RELTRAD typology was used. In accordance with Steensland et al. (2000) individuals are placed in the categories Black Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Other Religion, and No Religion. An additional item is considered on the Baylor Religion Survey that asks respondents to provide the name and location of their church. Dougherty, Johnson, and Polson (2007) describe this modified

version of RELTRAD and its value in research. The Evangelical Protestant group will be the contrast group throughout the analysis because of its propensity to be the most conservative of the religious groupings (Finlay and Walther 2003, Greeley and Hout 2006, Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008, Koch and Curry 2000, Olson and Cadge 2002, Olson et al. 2006, Smith 1998).

The attendance measure utilizes an item asking for how often the respondent frequented a place of worship. Possible responses were never, less than once a year, once or twice a year, several times a year, once a month, 2-3 times a month, about weekly, weekly, and several times a week. Higher scores indicate higher levels of attendance. Past research concerning same-sex unions fails to account for individuals' religious belief. The first measure of religious belief utilized in this study is how literally the Bible is interpreted by each individual. To measure biblical literalism a question was used asking respondents to choose which statement comes closest to their personal beliefs about the Bible: "The Bible means exactly what it says. It should be taken literally, word-for-word, on all subjects," "The Bible is perfectly true, but it should not be taken literally, word-for-word. We must interpret its meaning," "The Bible contains some human error," and "The Bible is an ancient book of history and legends." Higher scores correspond with increasing levels of biblical literalism.

Another measure of religious belief is how individuals view God. The Baylor Religion Survey contains many measures of beliefs about God, not just if God exists. The two most important images, Bader and Froese (2007) argue, are the extent to which God is angry and active. An angry image of God focuses on judgment, retribution, and wrath. An active view of God refers to whether or not God is removed from or directly

involved with human affairs. It is believed that these two views most strongly affect attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of individuals regarding moral issues so they will be focus of this study. The active view of God is an additive scale made up of seven different questions where higher scores represent a view of God as more active in the world. Respondents are asked what they think God is like using a five-point Likert-scale. Included are the descriptions, “Is God ‘removed from worldly affairs’, ‘concerned with the well-being of the world’, ‘concerned with my personal well-being’, ‘directly involved with worldly affairs’, and ‘directly involved in my affairs’.” The survey then asks if the adjectives “ever-present,” or “distant” describe God “very well, somewhat well, not very well, not at all, or undecided.” Each of these questions was flipped as needed and summed to create the active view of God scale. The resulting scores ranged from 7 to 35 with a mean of 27.07. This scale is hereafter referenced as the active God scale ($\alpha = 0.882$).

A scale representing an angry or wrathful view of God can also be created using the Baylor Religion Survey. The scale combines questions asking for level of agreement using a five-point Likert-scale towards the idea that God is “angered by human sin”, or “angered by my sins” with how well the words “critical,” “punishing,” “severe,” and “wrathful” describe God (“very well,” “somewhat well,” “undecided,” “not very well,” or “not at all”). These six responses were flipped as needed to coincide with higher scores equating to a more angry view of God. The results were then summed to create the angry God scale ($\alpha = 0.850$). The resulting scores ranged from 6 to 30 with a mean of 16.99. Previous research concerning homosexual marriage and civil unions does not account for God images as a measure of religious belief.

Control Variables

The control variables used in this analysis include age (in years), gender (male=1), race (white=1), marriage status (married=1), income, education, region (south=1), and political views. Each has received support in previous literature concerning its effect on attitudes towards homosexual issues. The income variable uses the categories \$10,000 or less, \$10,001-\$20,000, \$20,001-\$35,000, \$35,001-\$50,000, \$50,001-\$100,000, \$100,001-\$150,000, and \$150,000 or more. Education was measured as highest grade completed: 8th or less; 9-12th no diploma, high school graduate, some college, trade/technical/vocational training, college graduate, postgraduate work/degree. The political views control was constructed using an item asking the respondent to describe themselves politically. Possible responses were “extremely conservative,” “conservative,” “leaning conservative,” “moderate,” “leaning liberal,” “liberal,” and “extremely liberal.” The responses were ordered so higher scores correspond to more conservative political views.

Analytic Model

Due to the nature of the dependent variables binary logistic regression is used for each test. In the first test the demographic controls and religion variables are regressed on the choice variable. Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) performed the same test. This test extends their findings by using a wider array of religion measures to allow a fuller explanation of what is associated with believing homosexuality is the result of a choice

The second and third tests regress the attribution, religion, and demographic variables on agreeing with same-sex marriage and civil unions respectively. Two separate models are reported for each same-sex union dependent variable. The first

model contains each of the demographic and religion variables. This allows for a close replication of Olson et al.'s (2006) study. The second model adds in the attribution variable (choice). This results in a similar test performed by Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) and Wilcox and Norrande (2002). In this way the conclusions offered by the Olson et al. (2006), Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008), and Wilcox and Norrande (2002) studies can be directly compared. This ultimately provides a more definitive explanation regarding the association of religion and attribution with same-sex unions.

CHAPTER THREE

Results

Table 2 displays the results from the first test. This collection of explanatory variables produces a proportional reduction in error (PRE) of 21.48%. The results show that males are significantly more likely to agree that homosexuality is a choice compared to females. Similarly, individuals who label themselves as more politically conservative are more likely than their less politically conservative counterparts to believe homosexuality is the result of a choice. As education increases, the odds of believing homosexuals choose their orientation decreases. People who exhibit high levels of religious behavior are more likely to agree homosexuality is a choice. Compared to Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants are 54% less likely to believe homosexuals choose their orientation while Catholics are 43% less likely. Black Protestants, Jews, and the religiously unaffiliated are not significantly more or less likely than Evangelicals to attribute the cause of homosexuality to choice. Finally, as individuals view the Bible more literally they are 25% more likely to believe homosexuality is the result of a choice. In the same way, as individuals view God as more active in the world they are more likely to agree that homosexuality is a choice.¹

¹ Missing cases in each model are mainly due to the large number of religion variables included. The greatest number of missing cases results from the inclusion of the Active God and Angry God measures. The reason these belief scales cause so many missing cases is because those individuals who do not believe in God (atheists) are omitted. One must believe in God first to have a God-image. While including atheists in the discussion would be ideal, there are two reasons why their omission is not fatal to this discussion. First, the overarching focus of the paper is to investigate how religion, while accounting for beliefs about the cause of homosexuality, affects attitudes toward same-sex unions. Since atheists usually are not religious, this investigation does not directly concern them. Second, atheists are a very small portion of the adult population. The Baylor Religion Survey (2007) is almost identical to the General

Table 2
Logistic Regression of Choice as Cause of Homosexuality
on Demographic Controls and Religion Variables

Variables	Choice		
	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratios
<u>Sociodemographic</u>			
Age	-0.004	0.005	---
Male	0.927***	0.158	2.528
White	0.705	0.624	---
Married	0.122	0.167	---
Education	-0.108*	0.052	0.898
Politically Conservative	0.360***	0.057	1.433
<u>Religious behavior</u>			
Attendance	0.115***	0.034	1.122
<u>Religious tradition</u>			
Mainline Protestant	-0.776***	0.206	0.460
Black Protestant	0.845	0.772	---
Catholic	-0.558**	0.202	0.572
Jewish	-0.640	0.684	---
Other	-0.375	0.322	---
None	0.335	0.353	---
<u>Religious belief</u>			
Biblical Literalism	0.226*	0.099	1.254
Active God	0.042*	0.017	1.043
Angry God	0.007	0.013	---
Constant	-4.766***	0.835	
Pseudo R ²	0.339		
PRE	21.48%		
N	1073		

Data: Baylor Religion Survey (2007)

*p<.05 **p<.01 ***p<.001

Social Survey and other national surveys in its estimation of the number of atheists. Usually, atheists make up only 4 to 5 percent of the adult population. Due to these issues, additional analyses were conducted to ensure there are no systematic biases present in the missing cases compared to those cases included in each model. No systematic bias was found concerning each dependent variable of interest.

In Table 3 I find that older individuals are less likely to agree to same-sex marriages. The same is true for more politically conservative individuals and those from the south. In fact, political conservatives are 53% less likely to agree to homosexual marriage than their more liberal counterparts. Conversely, as income increases the odds of agreeing that homosexuals should be allowed to marry increase 16%. Turning to the religion variables I find that as people attend worship services more frequently their odds of agreeing with same-sex marriage decrease 13%. Mainline Protestants, Catholics, the religious “other” grouping and the religiously unaffiliated are all more likely than Evangelical Protestants to agree to same-sex marriages. I also find that as individuals view the Bible more literally the odds of agreeing with homosexual marriage decrease dramatically.

The proportional reduction in error (PRE) in model 1 is 41.72%. Compare this to model 2 with its inclusion of the attribution variable with a PRE of 43.47%, a slight increase. Generally, this means that taking attribution into account when discussing attitudes towards homosexual marriage reduces error in the model. Unsurprisingly, the choice variable was significant in the model. Individuals who believe homosexuality is a choice are almost 67% less likely to agree to homosexual marriages compared to those who do not. With the inclusion of the attribution variable the income and south variables fail to achieve significance as they did in model 1. Increasing age and political conservatism maintain statistically significant relationships however. The religious “other” group as well as the Mainline Protestant group failed to achieve statistical significance compared to the results from model 1. Religious behavior and belief continued to significantly predict negative attitudes towards same-sex marriage despite

Table 3
Logistic Regression Analysis of Support for Homosexual Marriage

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
<u>Sociodemographic</u>						
Age	-0.022***	0.006	0.978	-0.022***	0.006	0.978
Male	-0.227	0.197	---	-0.030	0.204	---
White	-0.203	0.734	---	-0.111	0.702	---
Married	-0.378	0.215	---	-0.335	0.218	---
Income	0.147*	0.074	1.158	0.128	0.074	---
Education	0.036	0.066	---	0.016	0.068	---
South	-0.460*	0.223	0.631	-0.415	0.227	---
Politically Conservative	-0.760***	0.073	0.468	-0.717***	0.075	0.488
<u>Religious behavior</u>						
Attendance	-0.142***	0.042	0.868	-0.127**	0.042	0.880
<u>Religious tradition</u>						
Mainline Protestant	0.576*	0.259	1.779	0.465	0.263	---
Black Protestant	0.742	0.895	---	0.788	0.918	---
Catholic	0.678**	0.260	1.970	0.561*	0.264	1.753
Jewish	0.603	0.589	---	0.493	0.608	---
Other	0.792*	0.381	2.207	0.757	0.393	---
None	1.464***	0.415	4.325	1.579***	0.427	4.849
<u>Religious belief</u>						
Biblical Literalism	-0.709***	0.120	0.492	-0.687***	0.121	0.503
Active God	0.024	0.020	---	0.030	0.020	---
Angry God	0.001	0.018	---	0.004	0.018	---
<u>Attribution</u>						
Choice	---	---	---	-1.094***	0.230	0.335
Constant	4.341***	0.999		4.160***	0.982	
Pseudo R ²	0.574			0.592		
PRE	41.72%			43.47%		

Source: Baylor Religion Survey, 2007

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

N=1,031(M1); N=1,030(M2)

the presence of the attribution variable. Similarly, Catholics and the religiously unaffiliated are still significantly more likely to agree with homosexual marriage compared to Evangelical Protestants net of attribution's effects.

Table 4 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis of demographic, religious, and attribution variables on agreeing that homosexuals should be allowed civil unions. In model 1 the analysis reveals that increasing income and education lead to a greater likelihood of agreeing to homosexual civil unions. As individuals become more politically conservative the odds of agreeing to same-sex civil unions decrease by almost 30%. Similarly, as religious service attendance increases individuals are less likely to agree. The religiously unaffiliated are much more likely than Evangelical Protestants to agree with homosexual civil unions. Also, those who interpret the Bible literally are much less likely to agree to civil unions than those who view the Bible less authoritatively. Likewise, individuals who view God as active and involved in the world are also less likely to agree to same-sex civil unions.

The PRE of model 1 is 33.81%. In comparison, the PRE of model 2 is 37.36%. As with homosexual marriage, including a variable that accounts for individuals' attribution of controllability reduces the error in the model. In model 2 we find that the attribution variable is again statistically significant. Those who believe that homosexuals choose their orientation are almost 60% less likely to agree to same-sex civil unions compared to those who do not believe homosexuals exert a choice. Similarly, increasing levels of income and education make one more likely to agree to homosexual civil unions. Conversely, those who are more politically conservative are less likely to agree. The more active one is in attending religious services the less likely they are to agree to

Table 4
Logistic Regression Analysis of Support for Homosexual Civil Unions

Variables	Model 1			Model 2		
	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio	Estimate	Standard Error	Odds Ratio
<u>Sociodemographic</u>						
Age	-0.007	0.005	---	-0.0098	0.005	---
Male	-0.273	0.172	---	-0.038	0.182	---
White	0.608	0.683	---	0.760	0.646	---
Married	-0.003	0.200	---	-0.008	0.205	---
Income	0.227***	0.065	1.254	0.255***	0.062	1.290
Education	0.233***	0.060	1.263	0.222***	0.066	1.249
South	-0.302	0.182	---	-0.283	0.188	---
Politically Conservative	-0.342***	0.062	0.710	-0.268***	0.064	0.765
<u>Religious behavior</u>						
Attendance	-0.127***	0.035	0.880	-0.107**	0.037	0.899
<u>Religious tradition</u>						
Mainline Protestant	0.405	0.221	---	0.211	0.229	---
Black Protestant	1.228	0.832	---	1.417	0.822	---
Catholic	0.382	0.220	---	0.236	0.228	---
Jewish	1.780	1.420	---	1.551	1.427	---
Other	-0.035	0.345	---	-0.088	0.359	---
None	1.145*	0.522	3.141	1.525**	0.555	4.594
<u>Religious belief</u>						
Biblical Literalism	-0.675***	0.108	0.509	-0.644***	0.110	0.525
Active God	-0.043*	0.019	0.958	-0.034	0.019	---
Angry God	0.006	0.015	---	0.008	0.015	---
<u>Attribution</u>						
Choice	---	---	---	-1.286***	0.182	0.395
Constant	2.849**	0.918		2.390**	0.900	
Pseudo R ²	0.499			0.539		
PRE	33.81%			37.36%		

Source: Baylor Religion Survey, 2007

*p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001

N=1,029(M1); N=1,028(M2)

same-sex civil unions. Only the religiously unaffiliated are significantly different from Evangelical Protestants regarding religious tradition. The active God measure also fails to achieve statistical significance in the second model. Finally, those who view the Bible more literally are less likely to agree with same-sex civil unions compared to those who might view the Bible as an ancient book of legends.

Discussion

The results from this study support many of the general findings found in previous literature. One key finding brought to the surface is the differences between attitudes toward homosexual marriage and same-sex civil unions among religious traditions. For homosexual marriage we find that even when the attribution variable is in the model distinct differences still exist between Evangelical Protestants and Catholics and the religiously unaffiliated respectively. When looking at same-sex civil unions though these differences disappear in the presence of the attribution variable. Thus, for homosexual marriage, how individuals' view the cause of homosexuality does not account for religious affiliation's effect. Attitudes toward civil unions operate differently concerning religious tradition.

A possible fundamental difference in how attitudes concerning same-sex marriages and same-sex unions operate inside different religious traditions could be at work here. For Evangelical Protestants the question of homosexual marriage elicits a strong, unfavorable view regardless of their views toward the cause of homosexuality. There is something about being an Evangelical Protestant that is opposed to homosexual marriage beyond taking religious belief, behavior, or even the controllability of homosexuality into account. For civil unions though, there are no such distinctions. It is

possible that the marriage question refers to a more “sacred” rite while civil unions refer to a more “legal” standing and as such might not push the same buttons for those identifying as Evangelical Protestants.

In support of past research, attribution is strongly associated with views concerning same-sex unions. If individuals’ view the cause of homosexuality as controllable they will be much more likely to disagree with allowing homosexuals the right to obtain legal marriages or even civil unions. As Haider-Markel and Joslyn explain, “Controllability suggests personal responsibility for behaviors” which results in “negative affect toward gays” and a “lack of support for gay rights” (2008:306). The findings presented here do not negate the similar claims made in past studies that “the single most important predictor of attitudes was the attribution of choice to sexual orientation” (Herek and Capitanio 1995:95) and “attributions were by far the strongest predictors of attitudes” (Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008:306). Thus, in comparing Olson et al.’s (2006) study with Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2008) and Wilcox and Norranders (2006) I find that when considering attitudes toward same-sex unions, excluding the attribution variable weakens the model. In support of Olson et al.’s general conclusion this study maintains that religion is still vitally important when discussing these issues.

Understanding religion’s varied influence is central to the study of attitudes concerning homosexuality. Religious belief, behavior, and affiliation are all important when predicting the likelihood of believing individuals choose their sexual orientation. In spite of demographic variables that have wielded considerable explanatory power in the past religion still plays a significant role. Religion maintains influence when considering same sex unions as well. Religious belief, behavior, and affiliation are all

significantly related net of attribution's effects. This, of course, is in addition to religion's strong association with the attribution variable itself. Concerning homosexual marriage, the attribution of choice does not account for the differences between Evangelical Protestants and Catholics and the unaffiliated respectively. Neither does an individual's view of the cause of homosexuality render religious behavior and belief impotent. In a sense, religious belief, behavior, and affiliation directly as well as possibly indirectly affect attitudes toward same-sex unions. Their direct effect is noted in Tables 3 and 4. Their indirect effect is supposed through their direct effect on beliefs of attribution which in turn directly affects attitudes toward homosexual marriage and civil unions. It is safe to assume that the religious beliefs, behaviors, and identities of the public play an important role in their attitudes concerning the cause of homosexuality as well as attitudes toward same-sex unions.

Beyond the persistent influence of the various religion variables in spite of demographic and attribution controls, even more interesting for discussion is the persistent significance of each religion measure in the presence of the other religion measures. For example, despite knowing how frequently one attends worship services or how literally she views the Bible or how active she believes God to be, knowing an individual's religious affiliation still is important when considering attitudes toward homosexuality's cause. When discussing agreement with same-sex unions religious belief, behavior, and affiliation all play a varied and significant role even when accounting for each other. Knowing how frequently an individual attends religious services makes them more likely to disagree with homosexual marriage beyond how literally they view the Bible or with what religious tradition they identify. The same

results are also present when considering homosexual civil unions. An individual might attend infrequently, but if her view of the Bible is literal she is much less likely to agree to allowing homosexuals the right to obtain civil unions.

Despite the effect of attribution, through a triangulation of religious belief, affiliation, and behavior we understand to a greater extent religion's association with attitudes toward same-sex unions. It is not enough to account for just one aspect of religiosity but all. A fundamental difference between attitudes toward homosexual marriage and homosexual civil unions is also found to be present among religious traditions. With this the pervasive impact religion plays in this issue is laid bare.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Past research has stressed the explanatory power of both religion and attribution in explaining attitudes toward same-sex unions. In previous studies there were shortcomings that did not allow for a complete statement to be made concerning the inter-relationships of the two. In this study a new data set was utilized to give greater breadth and depth to the religion side of the story while accounting for the ever-important attribution variable. Religious belief, behavior, and affiliation were found to be strongly associated with individuals' attributions of the cause of homosexuality. Religious belief, behavior, and affiliation were also observed to play a significant role in explaining attitudes toward same-sex marriages and civil unions despite accounting for individuals' views toward the cause of homosexuality. Most importantly though a more thorough description of religion's effect on attitudes toward same-sex unions was provided.

Olson et al. concluded that "the tide is not likely to turn in favor of same-sex marriages or civil unions without some reframing of the issue" (2006:356). The importance of attribution could be the "reframing" the authors were speaking of. If individuals began to attribute homosexuality to uncontrollable causes their views of homosexuals and homosexual civil rights could become more affirming. Haider-Markel and Joslyn state that, "If homosexuality comes to be largely viewed as a result of genetics, our results predict greater support for gay and lesbian civil rights," (2008:308). This could indeed prove to be true in the future if more individuals begin

to view homosexuality as an uncontrollable attribute. Some activists might believe that finding a gene responsible for homosexual orientation is the key to gaining equal standing in the public's eye. Haider-Markel and Joslyn offer a different outcome if homosexuality is ever shown to be the result of genetics: "the next step may not be tolerance but intervention. If the homosexual gene can be altered or manipulated in some way, the notion that homosexuality can be "cured" will surely be considered" (2008:308). In fact, the possibility of a biological explanation of homosexuality tends to further polarize previously held beliefs (Boysen and Vogel 2007). Individuals who had positive views of homosexuals accepted biological explanations as a more persuasive reason to accept homosexuals compared to those who viewed homosexuals negatively. Further, those with negative views toward homosexuals actually became more negative toward them once the biological explanation of homosexuality was introduced. The authors conclude that "learning about the biological explanations of homosexual behavior is interpreted through the lens of preexisting attitudes" (Boysen and Vogel 2007:755).

Could it be possible then that attribution may not actually be the engine that drives attitudes to be more positive or negative when considering homosexuality? Previous research points to the importance of "preexisting attitudes" and religion undoubtedly plays a significant role in the formation of these. There is countless evidence pointing to certain religious beliefs, behaviors, and identities being strongly associated with negative views toward homosexuals. It is possible that certain views toward attribution are co-opted by religious individuals to provide supplementary support to their previously held beliefs. This would also help explain the ability of

certain individuals to retain negative views of homosexuals despite being confronted with the possibility that homosexuals are not responsible for their behavior. It would also provide a reasonable explanation to the possibility that once a “homosexual” gene is found some individuals would support trying to have it “cured” in some way.

Religion will continue to play a central role in the formation and maintenance of attitudes toward homosexuality in the presence of and possibly even beyond the influence of attribution. As such, continuing to research religion’s effect on these issues is of the utmost importance.

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