

MORAL DISCOURSE, POLITICAL CULTURE, AND THE DEBATE OVER SAME-
SEX MARRIAGE

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ABSTRACT

KATHERINE MCFARLAND: Moral Discourse, Political Culture, and the Debate over
Same-Sex Marriage
(Under the direction of Dr. Andrew J. Perrin)

In the last decade, Americans across the nation have confronted the issue of same-sex marriage, creating a moral discourse that before did not exist. In this paper I analyze the frames used in debates over constitutional amendments defining marriage and other relationship recognition in newspapers in seven states. Contrary to previous research on public discussion of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) rights which argues that debates are polarized by values of equal rights vs. traditional morality, I find that, Americans also invoke tolerance, Constitutionality, family values, and separation of governmental powers when confronted with the issue of same-sex marriage.

Additionally, I show that use of some of these frames varies by state, confirming my hypothesis of the role of political culture. This research has implications for the role of moral discourse in political culture and the ways political culture varies (and the ways it does not vary) nationally.

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INTRODUCTION

In November 2006, Americans in eight states voted on state constitutional amendments that would define marriage as a union between one woman and one man, thereby prohibiting same-sex marriages. Voters in seven states approved their amendments while those in one state, Arizona, rejected it.¹ These results bring the national total up to 26 states that have passed constitutional amendments restricting marriage to heterosexual couples. Additionally, 19 states have similar explicit marriage laws.

Nationally, until the late 1990s Americans had never been asked to form opinions on same-sex marriage, making this one of the newest public policy issues on the national agenda (Evans 2006). LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) rights in general did not coalesce into a movement until the Stonewall Riots in 1969,² and in the 35 years since then activists worked towards increased rights and recognition for those who identify as LGBT through a number of issues. These include adding sexual orientation as a classification in hate crime and anti-discrimination laws, the right of LGBT persons to adopt children, and same-sex marriage. The emergence of same-sex marriage as a focal point for gay rights was not agreed upon by all as the most effective area for struggle. However, after couples in Hawaii sued for marriage rights in 1996 the issue gained

¹ In rejecting the proposed amendment, Arizona residents became the first in the nation to vote down a measure that would limit rights to same-sex couples.

² In this instance, a police raid on a known gay bar in New York, the Stonewall, sparked backlash by its patrons, an event that garnered national attention. The Stonewall riots are recognized many in the LGBT community as the start of large-scale agitation for greater political rights and recognition.

national attention and was quickly adopted by LGBT advocacy groups across the country. Since then, more cases have been filed with some, most notably *Goodridge et al. v. Department of Public Health in Massachusetts*, resulting in the decision that same-sex couples are entitled to the same marriage rights as heterosexual couples.

The issue has moved beyond courts as municipalities create domestic partner registries granting some legal rights and benefits to unmarried couples and politicians and citizens opposed to same-sex marriage have worked to pass state laws and constitutional amendments defining marriage as between one woman and one man. State constitutional amendments represent the best case to study relative to passage of state laws or general discussion across the country because in order to be ratified, they must be voted on in statewide elections, meaning that all registered voters in the state have a chance to voice their opinion on the issue.

In the run-up to potential ratifications, citizens grappled with the question of defining marriage in a way that they had not before been asked to do. Before 1996, only a handful of state marriage laws explicitly prohibited issuance of marriage licenses to same-sex couples, and no state had taken a large-scale vote on the issue. Adorno and others of the Frankfurt School stress the importance of studying opinions *in statu nascendi*, arguing that public opinion doesn't simply exist in individual minds but is formed in social processes (Olick 2007). Same-sex marriage is thus an issue at this nascent stage in which many Americans are forming opinions. In order to do this, Americans have created a moral discourse that before did not exist, as they use culturally understood notions of family, equality, tradition, and tolerance to evaluate this issue.

Through a content analysis of newspapers in seven of these states³ in the year leading up to the November 2006 election I will map the discursive fields surrounding same-sex marriage amendments and the variation in these fields by local political cultures.

The aim of this study is to outline the debate about same-sex marriage as it existed in 2006. Thematically I am interested in what this debate, carried out in newspapers across the country, can tell us about moral discourse in America: 1) How do positions both for and against legalized same-sex marriage reflect different values held by Americans? and 2) What does this discussion say about the larger debate over values in the public sphere? While same-sex marriage is frequently characterized as a dichotomous debate, I seek to bring out the nuances in the particular reasons some give to support or oppose marriage amendments.

In this study I ask which frames are culturally resonant across the U.S. The process is highly social; Americans create both pro- and con- arguments together through interaction. The ensuing discourse is not just about same-sex marriage; it is a continuation of the conversation of what Americans, as a nation, point to as their moral compass.

³ Colorado is excluded for reasons discussed in Methods section. Included states are Arizona, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

HISTORICAL BASIS

With its history of religious pluralism, moral discourse has long been a component to political dialogue in the U.S. Since there is no official state religion, all views are valid when it comes to moral debates. While this has not always been true in practice, it is codified in theory in the First Amendment's Establishment Clause on the separation of Church and State and survey evidence indicates Americans treasure this principle (Farkas et. al. 2001).⁴ Benjamin Franklin famously wrote that the new America needed a "public religion" that would be composed of "the essentials of all religions" (Hutcheson 1998; Marty 1987; Wuthnow 1998). Unlike traditional religions, public religion would be used to provide moral consensus and support the public order rather than save souls (Hutcheson 1988).

Since its founding, religious rhetoric has been a virtual constant in American politics (Kazin 2006). Americans, it seems, have taken Franklin's concept to heart and developed a strong cultural mixing of religion and politics (Ferree et. al. 2004). Americans intensely debate issues that touch on moral values,⁵ so the challenge has been to agree on what constitutes Franklin's religious essentials. For a long time, inclusiveness meant the acceptance of all Christian denominations; America was conceived as a "Christian nation" with fierce debate over the specifics but strong agreement about the basics of Christianity as its spiritual foundation (Hutcheson 1988).

⁴ There is a crucial semantic distinction here: the language is "Church and State" not "Religion and State", Church being understood as the enactment of a specific religion.

⁵ This is not to say that other countries do not, but as Ferree et. al. (2004) point out, public discourse in the United States uses more overtly moral language than in other countries.

Since the 1950s this foundation has been expanded to include believers of all faiths (though this inclusion is by no means full and complete), but research suggests there is still a strong boundary between believers and non-believers (Edgell, Gerteis, and Hartmann 2006; Gey 2007).

The definition of what is legitimate in moral discourse, then, has long been discussed and is far from over, but it is clear that it is of central importance in Americans' national culture and identity. The emergence of same-sex marriage as a focal point of moral debate, with its myriad interpretations of what is "good", make this a fruitful topic for understanding the moral discourse in the United States.

LITERATURE REVIEW

To effectively analyze debates over same-sex marriage amendments, I draw on literature of state political culture, public discussion of LGBT rights, and framing. Insights from these three areas comprise the tools I will use to effectively look at newspaper content and to situate my study within a larger framework.

State Political Culture

It seems a simple proposition: because there are 50 states, each with its own history and their own political autonomy, residents of these states operate differently in forming political policy and making political decisions. Patterson (1968) first asserted the importance of these political cultures in the enactment of American government at both the state and national level. Political cultures, he said, regulate civic participation in solving political problems, serving as a guide for the ways in which people become involved and their attitudes towards the reach and function of government (Patterson 1968). Elazar (1984) outlined the specific ways in which state political cultures differ from one another, with a typology of three political subcultures that exist in the United States – individualistic, moralistic, and traditional, showing how states vary in which subcultures are predominant. He attributes the differences to migration patterns of the first waves of European settlers to America. While the cause of political cultures may be contested, empirical verification shows their existence (DeLeon and Naff 2004; Erikson, McIver, and Wright 1987; Johnson 1976; Lieske 1999; Morgan and Watson 1991).

Within the literature on political cultures of the United States, there is disagreement as to whether the correct unit of analysis is region or state. Anywhere from three to ten distinct cultural regions have been identified, grouping states in their entirety or splitting them by county (Elazar 1967; Lieske 1993; Luttbeg 1971). Others assert that coherent variation occurs from state to state (Erikson, McIver, and Wright 1987). These positions are not necessarily at odds, as states can be seen as nested within regional cultures. Oregon and Washington, for instance, may both be part of the “Pacific Northwest” culture, or more broadly, part of the “West”, but they exhibit their own unique characteristics as well (at least according to their residents). As Lieske (1993) notes, state autonomy over internal governance allows cultural preferences to be institutionalized. With this understanding, state is the primary independent variable in my study, with political culture the unmeasured intermediary between state and media frames.

The question, then, becomes one of theoretical application. Does this distinction affect all issues faced by Americans equally, or are there some debates that are truly national while others are more variable by state? On the one hand, Mead (2004) found Elazar’s classifications most useful to understand welfare reform after states’ were give greater autonomy in conducting welfare policy in 1996. On the other hand, in their study of abortion debates, Cook, Jelen, and Wilcox (1993) concluded that with this issue there cannot be said to exist significant variation among states. Rather, the issue is wholly national.

Politically the question of varying cultures is important in that there is much discussion over whether moral issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage belong

properly under federal or state jurisdiction. Advocates of federal regulation (aimed either to legally allow or prohibit actions) argue these issues are of such importance to the moral character of the nation that there is no room for variation among the states. Those that say, alternatively, that states should be left to make their own decisions hold that what is right in one state may not be right in another; an argument essentially for cultural relativism that presumes the existence of separate political cultures. In my study, I aim to neither reify nor debunk the idea of unique state political cultures, but rather further our understanding of what these cultures are, if anything, and how they work.

Public Discussion on LGBT Issues

Research on discussion of LGBT rights highlights two main sides: equality/civil rights arguments that most often favor increased rights for lesbians and gays; and reasoning drawing from traditional morality that argues against granting these rights (Brewer 2003a; Hull 2006; Price, Nir, and Capella 2005; Tadlock, Gordon, and Popp 2007). In her analysis of letters to the editor following high-profile same-sex marriage lawsuits in Hawaii and Vermont, Hull (2006) concluded that both sides essentially talked past each other because each denied the legitimacy of the others' argument. On the pro-marriage side, arguments centered on civil rights for all while the anti-side took traditional morality as their foundation. Brewer's (2003a) content analysis of newspaper coverage of LGBT rights yielded slightly different results. While he found equality used both to support and against gay rights⁶, the traditional morality frame was used almost exclusively to oppose gay rights.

⁶ The anti-gay rights equality frame is often expressed as "special rights". Advocates argue that hate crimes legislation does not need to single out sexual orientation and that marriage is a rights of all, as long as they marry someone of the opposite sex.

There is the much talked about “culture wars”, in which some scholars say Americans are becoming more polarized in their opinions and that this polarization exists along a cultural axis (Hunter 1996; Woodard 1996), while others contradict such conclusion (DiMaggio, Evans, and Bryson 1997; Smith et. al. 1997). Much current research seems to fall into dichotomous thinking of a two-sided culture war, presenting an impasse in discussion of LGBT rights. Other research, however, finds greater diversity of reasoning in public debate.

Brewer (2003b) found that while both traditional morality and equality are core values used to form an opinion on LGBT rights, they are used in combination with each other and with other values such as partisanship and ideology⁷. Using Swidler’s (1986) analogy of culture as a toolkit, it is as if both the tools themselves and their use have altered. Ashbee (2007) suggests that arguments put forth against legalizing same-sex marriage are changing in both character and tone since the 2003 Supreme Court decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*.⁸ Particularly, he proposes that the “slippery slope” argument (expanded gay rights will lead to legalization of polygamy, bestiality, and even incest) is gaining prominence over the “traditional morality” argument.

My study will add to this body of research by enumerating the tools cultures create to understand same-sex marriage. Rather than look at arguments as dichotomous, as some have done, I will evaluate claims of Brewer (2003b) and Ashbee (2007) that

⁷ Brewer writes of the use of the values in the aggregate, social level, not necessarily within the same person in a psychological sense.

⁸ This decision was seen as a landmark by many pro-LGBT rights groups, because it struck down anti-sodomy laws in the United States with the reasoning that Americans have a right to liberty in private acts. In his dissenting opinion, however, Justice Antonin Scalia argued that this logic could pave the way to legalizing all manner of sexual acts including incest, bestiality, and polygamy, deemed harmful to the public interest (Ashbee 2007).

multiple logics such as those of religious morality, equality, and legal authority are currently being used to understand same-sex marriage.

Framing

To operationalize the content of debate over same-sex marriage, I will use the concept of frames. Framing literature understands its basic unit of analysis in different ways. Here I hope to clarify what I mean when I use the term.

In his *Frame Analysis*, Goffman (1974) wrote that we use frames to organize and make sense of each situation we encounter. A frame is a value-added definition of a situation. In applying one, we engage not only our cognition of sights and sounds, but our cultural understanding of context by tying a specific situation to a more generalized form. When employed in the media, a frame imposes a logic of evaluation; it says what the situation is *about* (Perrin 2006).

Because frames are used, like language itself, to represent ideas, they are dependent on these original ideas. In the causal chain that researchers are forever trying to establish, then, frames in my study are the dependent variable and analysis will focus on the ways they are created (Scheufele 1999). Coming from a sociological or constructionist perspective, this outlook views the creation of frames as dependent on societal, group, and individual level variables (Van Gorp 2007). Activists in social movement organizations create frames in order to embed their particular interpretation of a situation as problematic and in need of a certain solution, but once they are “out there” the public deals with them and makes them its own (Benford & Snow 2000; Rohlinger 2002; Williams 1995).

This view contrasts with the psychological or cognitive perspective which sees frames as a structural variable to which individuals react, taking a psychological or cognitive view (Van Gorp 2007). In everyday use frames are experienced by individuals as durable structures (Goffman 1974). As such, researchers have most commonly studied framing as an independent variable (Benford & Snow 2000; Druckman 2001; Scheufele 1999). This strain of research tends to understand the media as controlled by elite journalists and/or politically motivated actors so that only their interpretation is disseminated to the public (see for example Entman 1993; Ghoshal 2005; Price, Nir, and Cappella 2005; Tuchman 1978).

Frames are not created in a value-neutral way, of course. In a debate as heated as same-sex marriage, actors on both sides actively pursue framing strategies with an eye to how best to cast the issue to draw support for their side. In this discussion, then, I do not want to suggest that frames simply rise up haphazardly or naturally from the culture. Once created, however, frames are received, manipulated, and even rejected by a thinking and engaged public (Benford & Snow 2000; Gamson & Modigliani 1989; Gamson 1992). Choice of frame, rather than one way - from journalist to public - is a dialectic process mediated by salience to the audience, editorial goals of the news organization, and practical factors of producing daily news (Camblos 2006; Gamson & Modigliani; Van Gorp 2007).

In a study that takes a similar understanding of frames as mine, Saguy (2000) compared the interpretations of sexual harassment in the U.S. and France, attributing the differences to divergent cultural understandings of what constitutes sexual harassment. Media frames were an important window into aspects of the particular cultures of these

two countries. Ferree et. al. (2002) use the term “discursive opportunity structure” to define the cultural climate in which frames are used and created. Each society has its own particular structure in which some frames are allowed and others are not. In the U.S., for example, frames which emphasize deference to authority rarely appear because there is little cultural value placed on the notion. Those who create frames for particular issues – interest groups, politicians, and of course newspaper reporters – attempt to use those that are most resonant with their audience (Benford & Snow 2000; Camblos 2006; Ferree et. al. 2002). The discursive opportunity structure prevents the sustained presence of frames that are not culturally resonant (Ferree et. al. 2002).

This research by Saguy (2000) and Ferree et. al. (2002) provides a methodological and theoretical basis which I will apply to a separate issue. These authors have shown their method to be effective in other public morality debates, investigating discourse over sexual harassment and abortion, respectively. Additionally, they have established the effectiveness of using media content as a proxy for the study of political culture. The advent of discourse over same-sex marriage provides a rich case study for understanding how people within (a) culture(s) react when faced with a new situation. Do citizens’ cultural competencies motivate adaptation or encourage resistance? For this debate, I see Americans’ cultural interest in public morality as the lens through which it is most relevant to view this debate, i.e., it is my frame.

METHODS

Case Selection

In order to understand public discourse leading up to votes on state constitutional amendments regarding same-sex marriage, I included newspaper articles from seven states that considered the issue statewide in November 2006: Arizona, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin. While eight states in the nation had amendments on their ballots, the text of one - Colorado – was significantly more limited than the rest. In Colorado, the proposed amendment dealt solely with the definition of marriage between one woman and one man. Also on Colorado’s ballot was an initiative to allow civil unions between same-sex couples. All of the other states included further restrictions in their texts, proscribing not only marriage but “contracts”, “unions”, “partnerships”, or “quasi-marriages” for same-sex couples. These debates were much broader and dealt not only with the symbolic meaning of marriage but the practical legal benefits given to married couples. Additionally, the text of some amendments may be read to prohibit certain legal benefits to all unmarried couples, regardless of sexuality. While each amendment contains slightly different wording, those of the seven states included in this study all have in common that they make marriage plus some extension available only to heterosexual couples (Evans 2006).⁹

These seven states vary in their demographic, religious, and political makeup. Arizona is both the most racially/ethnically diverse and the most urban, with non-

⁹ See Appendix A for full text of proposed marriage amendments in Arizona, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Hispanic whites making up only 60.4% of the population and 89.1% of residents living in urban areas. On the other end of the spectrum is South Dakota, with a population that is 87.0% non-Hispanic white and 51.9% urban. Religiously, many Tennesseans and South Carolinians are members of evangelical Protestant congregations (37.0% and 29.4%, respectively), while in Wisconsin, South Dakota, and Arizona there are many Catholic Church members (31.6%, 24.0%, and 19.0%, respectively). Arizona and Virginia have the largest segments of residents unclaimed by religious congregations surveyed (60.1% and 58.4%, respectively).¹⁰

Nearly all states had Republican controlled legislatures at the time of the November 2006 election. Tennessee is the only exception, with a Republican Senate and a Democratic House of Representatives. On the one hand, this represents one possible limitation to the study, because it cannot be known what effect the political party of the leadership may have had on the discourse analyzed. On the other hand, this strengthens my study because without the absence of a “blue”¹¹ state eliminates possible confounding due to the party in power. It is also not surprising that amendments were considered in red states, given that nationally this issue is higher on the Republican Party agenda than that of the Democratic Party. Save Arizona, all amendments reached the statewide ballot after passing state legislature. In Arizona, the measure appeared as a citizen initiative.

There was a wide range of voter turnout in the seven states, and all but South Carolina had turnouts above the national average of 41.4% of eligible voters. South

¹⁰ These data come from the Glenmary Research Center’s survey of church membership, which gathers reports from congregation leaders to tally membership in the United States. This source is useful in that it provides information not only religious identification but on religious adherence (as measured by church membership), a factor that may more accurately indicate religious influence in voting behavior than identification (Finke and Scheitle 2005).

¹¹ The terms “blue state” and “red state” most commonly refer to whether state’s electoral votes usually go to the Democratic or Republic presidential candidate. I use the term to refer to majority representation in the state legislature.

Dakota had the highest turnout; with 59% of eligible voters they were second nationally only to Minnesota. Voter turnout is an indication of interest in the election, but there is not sufficient evidence to suggest that the proposed marriage amendment specifically had any effect on these numbers. While Virginia, for example, saw significant growth in turnout compared to the 2002 mid-term election, voters also decided a very competitive Senate race. South Dakota, conversely, reported a high turnout but this was actually a decrease from its 2002 figure. (Pillsbury, Johannesen, & Arp 2006)¹²

All states except for Arizona ratified their amendments. Nevertheless, the approving percentage of voters varied widely, from 81% in Tennessee to 52% in South Dakota. It is not my aim in this study to determine why states saw the outcomes that they did. There are, to be sure, structural reasons why Tennesseans overwhelmingly approved their amendment while Wisconsin residents were more lukewarm. Evidence from exit polls indicated that evangelical Protestants and those who live in rural areas (both large percentages of Tennessee residents) were more likely to favor amendments with a conservative definition of marriage than others (CNN 2006). However, there was still considerable variation in voting patterns that may not be adequately explained using solely demographic factors. For example, while many Tennesseans live in rural areas, so do many South Dakotans, yet election results show a difference of nearly thirty percentage points in residents' approval of their respective amendments. More importantly, I take the election results as evidence for possible difference in political culture that goes beyond the make-up of citizens. Political culture should be understood as an interactive, rather than simply additive, model of citizen contact.

¹² See Appendix C for full demographic, religious, and political information.

Data Source

Data for this project consists of news articles, editorials, and letters to the editor published in print newspapers on Sundays and Thursdays in the year leading up to the November 2006 election (November 6, 2005 to November 6, 2006). In total, 600 articles were analyzed. As a research method, content analysis was chosen over techniques such as quantitative surveys or qualitative interviews because newspapers provide nonreactive data that was produced independent of the research context (Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 2005). Unlike surveys, media content provide a view into public opinion as it is formed and often consist of citizens debating with each other rather than responding to a third party, a distinction that is important in getting at what the public “really” thinks (Olick 2007). These media, then, provide a snapshot of political debate in each state to be studied, and are thus a valuable measure of the local political culture (Perrin 2005).

In each state I selected all relevant items from the two largest print newspapers by circulation in each state. These papers are available to nearly all residents in the states and with their prominence serve as validators for what is and what is not considered news (Ferree et al. 2002; Johnson-Cartee 2005). For one State, South Dakota, the second largest newspaper, the *Rapid City Journal*, was not electronically available, so another paper, the *Aberdeen American News*, was used instead.

A weakness of using large papers as my source is that these papers are, as a rule, published in the major cities of each state. Often cultural differences are seen to fall on a rural/urban dividing line, with rural culture being more conservative. This would mean that my data would consist of more liberal messages than may be expressed in other forums (for example, rural community newspapers) overall in the state. While this bias

may exist, it is neutralized in my study by the fact that it is equally present in every state. The total media discourse of each state is represented by its largest papers, and considerable variation can be expected among these fourteen papers. The question is whether Norfolk, Virginia is more liberal than Boise, Idaho, and whether *The Post & Courier* in Charleston, South Carolina presents same-sex marriage differently than *The Argus Leader* in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

The time frame of one year prior to the November 2006 election was chosen in order to most accurately capture debate about the proposed amendments. In each state proposed measures were on the public radar for varying amounts of time according to internal constitutional rules. In Virginia and Wisconsin, measures were first approved by both houses of the legislature in two consecutive sessions, making the earliest appearance of a proposed amendment March 2004, in Wisconsin's House and Senate, before being put before voters for ratification. In Tennessee, South Carolina, Idaho, and South Dakota, amendments were approved once, in either 2005 or 2006, by the state legislature, then put on the November 2006 ballot. Arizona's constitutional amendment reached the ballot after a citizen group collected enough signatures for the measure to become a citizen initiative. A full year, then, is necessary to capture the full range of debate, from its early stages to right before Election Day. More time than that carries the possibility of introducing "noise" from media coverage of debates in neighboring states or other events not specifically related to the proposed amendments, while less time may lose important early discussion.

Media items analyzed include all published articles relating to same-sex marriage published on Sundays and Thursdays. This includes news coverage, commentary, op-ed,

editorials, and letters to the editor. Marriage announcements, political cartoons, obituaries, graphics, and advertisements were excluded. Sundays were analyzed because they have the most overall newspaper content, with a high proportion of opinion pieces. Thursdays provided news and opinion content falling in the middle of the news week. All newspapers in the sample are electronically archived, so to find relevant articles I used the search terms “marriage amendment”, “same-sex marriage”, “gay marriage”, “heterosexual* marriage”, and “civil union*”. These searches returned items related to same-sex marriage but not specifically addressing the ballot measures, for instance, coverage of candidates’ campaigns in which their stance on same-sex marriage is presented. Also, some articles mentioned same-sex marriage without specifically addressing the issue. When same-sex marriage was coupled with other “social issues” such as abortion, stem-cell research, and/or drug policy, the article cannot be said to discuss same-sex marriage and therefore was excluded from analysis. In June 2006 the U.S. Senate considered a federal marriage amendment and this was covered in newspapers across the country. These articles are included but coded separately; they are part of the meaningful debate about the legalization of same-sex marriage and it will be interesting to see if there is any difference with these articles than any others.

Coding

With all relevant newspaper items, text was hand-coded by two coders, the researcher and an assistant, to identify all frames used. Coding protocol was created in advance by reviewing literature created by the major pro-and anti-amendment groups, and test-coding approximately 150 articles from newspaper issues that are not part of the

sample (e.g. Wednesdays). A subset of 105 articles (17.5%) were double-coded for reliability, with all variables achieving Cohen's kappa scores above 0.70 (Cohen 1960). While this score is below the ideal of 0.80 for content analyses, these are essentially "expert" codes requiring judgment in their application, and the study is exploratory in nature. Thus the 0.70 standard is appropriate (Riffe, Lacy, and Fico 1998). Additionally, all variables with kappa scores between 0.70 and 0.80 had over 90% agreement between coders.

A "frame" is defined as the primary logic used to justify one's argument. In this study, a frame may be, for example, "allowing same-sex couples to marry would devalue the institution of marriage", or "same-sex couples often have children, and allowing them to marry would be in the best interest of those children". In these examples, the essential question of "why" is addressed by calling forth one moral value. Frames are unitary ideas and as such many frames may occur in a single article. Competing frames may even be encountered in a single article, as journalists may seek out multiple frames in order to present news stories considered balanced (Johnson-Cartee 2005). The unit of analysis is the article, and multiple coding of frames is allowed per article. There is a median of two frames per article.

In order to differentiate the types of voices heard in news articles, coding includes information in addition to the presence of specific frames and their directions. Items were coded as to source (from news wire or local reporter), type of article (editorial, letter to the editor, etc.), time of publication, focus (state amendment, federal amendment, etc.), and speaker (citizen, cleric, elected official, etc.).¹³

¹³ See Appendix D for full coding procedures.

Analysis

To begin my analysis, I describe the types of articles in my sample, their foci, and the sources from which they are drawn. Next I move to description of the frames used to argue for and against proposed state constitutional amendments using basic frequencies. Descriptive frequencies are presented for all frames found and other key variables. In this section I include analysis of which speakers are most likely to use each type of frame, drawn from a series of logistic regressions of each frame on types of speaker as well cross-tabulations to measure co-occurrence of speaker and frame. Because my coding scheme measures only presence and absence of both speaker and frame, it isn't possible to directly measure which speakers use which frame, but through these analytic procedures we get a picture of each frame as it is used. I also use quotes from articles to illustrate the tone and logic of each frame.

To explore variation by state, chi-square tests are performed and Cramer's V measures of association are calculated. States are also grouped into three regions: South (South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia), Midwest (Wisconsin and South Dakota), and West/Mountain (Idaho and Arizona) and tested for significant variation of frames.

After exploring the structure of frames used and their crude variation among all states, I highlight three states, Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin, for specific comparison. This selection is due primarily to the large amount of articles published about same-sex marriage relative to the numbers in other states. Because of its low numbers (only 18 articles), the *Lewiston Morning Tribune* will be excluded and analysis will focus on the five remaining newspapers – the *Idaho Statesman*, the *Virginian-Pilot* and *Richmond Times-Dispatch* in Virginia, and the *Wisconsin State Journal* and *Milwaukee Journal*

Sentinel in Wisconsin. Collectively, these five newspapers published 442 articles, making up 73.7% of the sample. Individual, each of newspaper published over 50 articles, providing enough data for adequate comparison.

Beyond the simple feasibility of using these three states for comparison, they are also appropriate because their outcomes are in the mid-range of all states in the sample. The amendment was approved by a closer margin in these states than in South Carolina or Tennessee, where approval was 80%, but not so close as in Arizona or South Dakota, where voters were split at around 50% approval. These states then represent neither extreme. Additionally, the legislative history of each state's amendment was similar, having been on its' agenda for multiple years and, in Virginia and Wisconsin, passing in two consecutive sessions. Finally, these states are dispersed throughout the U.S., clustering in no one region of the country.

With the five newspapers from Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin (the *Idaho Statesman* and both papers each from Virginia and Wisconsin), I continue the analysis of state variation by performing binomial logistic regressions of each frame on a set of independent variables. The newspaper in which articles are published is the main independent variable; all others are treated as controls. These include date of publication, day (Sunday or Thursday), local authorship (vs. AP/Wire source), and presence of each speaker. Originally all variables collected were considered for inclusion, but after performing checks for multicollinearity, I decided to exclude type of article (news, editorial, or letter) and section of newspaper. These variables correlate strongly with local authorship and the presence of an "ordinary citizen" because all letters to the editor (50.7% of the subsample) were authored locally by ordinary citizens and appear in the

Opinion section of the newspaper. Additionally, there is a significant association between type of article and newspaper, such that the *Idaho Statesman* published far more letters to the editor (81.9% of all its articles) than the rest of the newspapers. By including local authorship and presence of each speaker I will then indirectly control for the influence of type of article and section of publication.

With each regression, I calculate and report predicted probabilities that a given frame will appear in each newspaper. I then compare the predicted probabilities between newspaper and state, determining what variance of frame occurs within each state and what patterns emerge between states.

RESULTS

Basic Description of Articles

In this section, I present results for 600 relevant articles from 14 newspapers during the one-year time frame of November 6, 2005 to November 5, 2006. There were more articles about same-sex marriage published on Sundays than Thursdays (62.7% and 37.3%, respectively), and articles are reasonably distributed over the year time frame. There were three main time spikes for published articles. First, in February both the legislatures in both Idaho and Wisconsin passed their amendments to put them on the ballot, generating new coverage in these states. Second, in early June 2006, the U.S. Senate voted on a federal constitutional amendment to restrict marriage to heterosexual couples. Third, there were many articles published about same-sex marriage in the two months leading up to the November 2006 vote.

There is wide variation in number of articles published by each source. At the high end are newspapers from Wisconsin, publishing 34.2% of the total sample, and the *Idaho Statesman* with 116 articles, 19.3% of the sample. At the low end, the *Aberdeen American News* in South Dakota published only three relevant articles during the time frame. This finding in itself is significant in that it appears the issue of state constitutional amendments regarding marriage simply did not generate much public discussion in some areas. For statistical purposes, there is a weakness in the fact that there simply is not a lot

of data for a few states.¹⁴ However, over 50 articles were found for the majority of states.¹⁵

The vast majority of articles (86.0%) were written by local newspaper staff while only 9.5% came from the AP or other wire services. A few articles (4.5%) were authored by guest columnists, often activists, politicians, or community members writing opinion pieces.

Framing of Same-Sex Marriage

In all, seventeen distinct frames were identified: nine opposing, seven supporting, and one neutral with regard to the proposed amendments or same-sex marriage in general.¹⁶ These frames were used by ten different types of speakers: the authors (journalists) of the article; local, state, and national politicians; activists; members of the clergy; judges, lawyers, and other experts (such as academics); ordinary citizens; “supporters” and “opponents”, presented in generically by journalists; and other/unspecified speakers, which often were prominent people such as official spokespersons who did not fit into the other categories.^{17,18} Arguments employed to oppose amendments ranged from calls for equal rights and tolerance for diversity to practical concerns for legal recognition of existing same-sex committed couples and families and

¹⁴ Specifically, South Dakota, Arizona, and South Carolina each have less than 40 articles. When this applies to an important finding, this will be noted.

¹⁵ See Appendix B for frequencies for each newspaper source.

¹⁶ Throughout this report, I will write of positions regarding amendments or laws, referring to the concept of same-sex marriage only when appropriate. While many arguments center on this concept, the question before citizens was primarily legal/constitutional, incorporating understandings of the role of government in addition to moral ideals. The issue is confounded by a third legal status, civil unions, in place in some localities. Civil unions confer the same civil rights and responsibilities upon couples as marriage without the ideologically-loaded marriage label.

¹⁷ In cases where a speaker was simultaneously more than one type of speaker, such as a politician who is also an ordained minister, a hierarchy of speaker types was created (see Appendix D for full coding protocol).

¹⁸ Coding procedures allowed for recording presence or absence of each type of speaker. Therefore, I cannot attribute frames specific speakers in the data, but I do measure co-occurrence of frame and speaker.

consideration of the role of government in marriage regulation. To support prospective marriage amendments, citizens argued that heterosexuality is part of the essential definition of marriage and that these marriages are a building block of society such that legalized same-sex unions would threaten social stability, at times pointing to the Bible or religion as an authority. As with the anti-amendment arguments, supporters also frame the debate in terms of the role of government, saying that amendments protect against “activist judges” that are viewed to overstep their authority in overturning heterosexual-only marriage laws.

Of the 600 articles about same-sex marriage studied, 70 (11.7%) did not include any frame. Many of these were brief news accounts of legislative proceedings or announcements of upcoming events in which only the status of the proposed amendment was given. Many were also articles that focused on an issue other than same-sex marriage, such as a political campaign in which a candidate would state his or her position on the issue without giving a reason. Pieces without an argument were found most often among news items (26.8%), rather than editorials or letters to the editor (7.2% and 2.9%, respectively). One article included twelve distinct frames, the maximum, but 99% had seven or less.

Ordinary citizens appeared most frequently in all articles analyzed (47.3%). These were overwhelmingly letter-writers (88.3% of all such instances). Politicians were the next frequent speakers (16.7% of articles), occurring in news and editorials or commentaries. Next in frequency were activists and article authors (12.7% and 12.2%, respectively), followed by the four other speaker types, each appearing in less than ten percent of articles. In the following discussion of frames, I will indicate the types of

speakers whose occurrence is most likely to predict the occurrence of each frame, as identified through a logistic regression on each frame.

Articles are categorized as to whether they contain only arguments in support or neutral to the amendments, only in opposition or neutral of them, or employ both pro and con frames. The majority of letters to the editor (67.9%) and a plurality of articles overall (48.3%) contain only frames in opposition to proposed amendments. Also frequently used in letters to the editor are exclusively frames that support amendments (24.6% of letters, 17.8% overall). Editorials and commentaries most often use anti-amendment frames only (51.2%), but new articles tend to use a combination of directional frames (42.9%) and one quarter (26.8%) use no frame at all.

Overall, letter writers, editorialists, and news authors argued in opposition to proposed amendments rather than in support of them. Of the 600 articles analyzed, 406 (67.7%) contained at least one argument against the proposed amendment, with a mean of 1.5 anti-amendment arguments used per article in the sample. On the other side, 223 articles (37.2%) employed pro-amendment arguments and had a mean of 1.0 per article. This contrasts sharply with election results in which citizens in all but one state in the sample passed their respective constitutional amendments. With only one exception, a series of t-tests of group means show no statistically significant relationship between state and mean number of anti- or pro-amendment arguments per article. This means that one could not accurately gauge the amount of opposition or support for proposed amendments based on a simple tally of discussion found in major newspapers. However, the subject of this paper is the substance of this discussion – differences in types of arguments rather than numbers of pro vs. con.

One frame, which I call Distraction/ Political, was used in a way that was not consistently in support of or in opposition to proposed amendments. Many speakers said that these amendments were simply distractions used by the Republican Party in order to drum up support or to take attention away from other political issues such as the war in Iraq, the economy, and education (present in 12.2% of all articles). An editorial by the Memphis Commercial appeal exemplifies this frame:

[Sen. Bill Frist] courageously put election-year pomp over real-world circumstance by diverting the nation's attention from war, climate change and rising oil prices to an issue that would affect several people - gay marriage.
– Memphis Commercial Appeal, 6/11/06

While this contention was frequently used in conjunction with anti-amendment arguments, those who used them did not always oppose the amendment. Often, politicians would say that their states' amendments were a distraction as a way to qualify either their support or opposition, as in these quotes:

It seems to be very popular and what the people want to have -- this defined in the constitution -- but I don't know if it was necessary
– Scott McLeod, candidate for Idaho's State Senate in the Lewiston Morning Tribune, 10/19/06

I regret the time and energy this divisive measure is stealing from the important issues - transportation, education, health care and the environment - issues that truly affect all Virginians.
- Gov. Timothy M. Kaine of Virginia in the Richmond Times-Dispatch, 4/09/06

The most common frame used to oppose proposed amendments, as well as the most common frame overall, is Equality/ Rights (36.2% of all articles). With this frame,

citizens speak about the equality of all Americans and argue that those in same-sex relationships deserve the same right to marry the person of their choice as those in heterosexual relationships. People using this frame use say that their state's amendment would write discrimination into the Constitution, a document whose purpose they understand is to grant rights rather than take them away. The presence of clergy and ordinary citizens as speakers are significant in predicting occurrence of the equality frame. Cross-tabulations show that nearly half of the time clergy or ordinary citizens are present in an article the equality frame is present as well (44.4% and 45.4%, respectively). Though not significant in my regression model, activists are also highly associated with this frame; the two co-occur in 52.6% of all articles.

Similar to the Equality/Rights frame are those I label Tolerance and Change/Constitutionality. Users of the Tolerance frame (29.3%) do not specifically talk about rights or express the equality of gays and lesbians, but they focus on tolerance as a moral and civic value. Often these speakers cite their religious values and counter those who say that Christianity prohibits homosexuality by saying that the greater message of Christianity is love for all people, as when letter writer Wayne Sigelko wrote,

It is a simple issue of fairness and compassion. We Catholics will vote our consciences on this issue.”

– Wisconsin State Journal, 11/02/06

They say that an amendment would be divisive to a diverse people, or that the one proposed in their state is just plain mean. Many often included concern that it would make their state seem unwelcoming, like this activist in South Carolina:

People are tired of this image of the South as the home of bigotry, as a place that is not welcoming to all people.

- Manju Rajendran, South Carolina Equality Coalition in The State, 10/01/06

Some, including the Wisconsin Technology Council, even say this message of intolerance could hurt business or tourism:

Wisconsin must remain a place where innovative people want to live and work. If existing or proposed laws, ordinances and constitutional amendments send the message that Wisconsin is not diverse or tolerant, the state will be placed at a disadvantage in the national and global competition for human capital. And without human capital, Wisconsin cannot grow a prosperous, knowledge-based economy.

- Wisconsin State Journal, 10/29/06

In my regression model, the presence of many types of speakers – author, activist, clergy, and ordinary citizen predict the Tolerance frame. These speakers co-occur with the tolerance frame in an average of 42% of all articles.

In a related argument, many citizens argue that while legalized same-sex marriage may be contrary to public opinion now, this is likely to change (19.8%). Regression analysis shows that different speakers predict this frame than predict the tolerance frame: article author, judge/lawyer/expert, and “supporters” or “opponents” (a generic label used by article authors). These speakers co-occur with the Change/ Constitution frame in about 45% of all articles. This frame, then, may be used more by “experts” just as journalists, judges, and scholars rather than more politically motivated activists or less politically savvy ordinary citizens. For instance this frame is used by Don Dahlin, a professor of political science at the University of South Dakota, saying,

I think a value that most of these students seem to have are values of tolerance and acceptance...They are more tolerant and open-minded than other generations.

- Argus Leader, 11/05/06

Therefore, they say that this issue is one of public policy for which laws are appropriate and to put a provision into the Constitution is too permanent. This argument was prominently made by Judge J. Harvie Wilkinson III in a Washington Post column that was quoted in his home state of Virginia:

The Framers meant our Constitution to establish a structure of government and to provide individuals certain inalienable rights against the state...To use the Constitution for prescriptions of policy is to shackle future generations that should have the same right as ours to enact policies of their own.

- Richmond Times-Dispatch, 9/10/06

Those who use this frame often cite current state law prohibiting same-sex marriage, arguing that these make an amendment to the Constitution unnecessary.

On the pro-amendment side, the most popular argument was that heterosexual marriage is a building block of society such that legalized same-sex marriage would threaten the structure of society in unknown ways (21.2% of all articles). This argument was put forth most prominently by President George W. Bush, in a public statement after the June 2006 U.S. Senate debate on the issue:

The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith.

Ages of experience have taught humanity that the commitment of a husband and wife to love and to serve one another promotes the welfare of children and the stability of society.

- President George W. Bush, in the Memphis Commercial Appeal, 5/28/06

The presence of politicians, activists, and “supporters” or “opponents” in articles significantly predict this frame’s occurrence. The speakers and frame co-occur in about 41% of articles, though for “supporters” or “opponents” this figure is higher; 66.7% of articles that attribute a frame to this generic speaker include the presence of the Definition/ Building Block frame.

Interestingly, this argument is characterized by its vagueness. What exactly the threat posed to society is rarely offered, other than a general breakdown of marriage and family structure. Speakers using this argument often invoke themes of tradition, “natural order”, and the sanctity of marriage. It is possible that these terms are euphemisms for more specifically religious arguments, but that cannot be determined in the present study.

Next in popularity is a call to enact proposed amendments to prevent “judicial activism” (16.5%). Those who use this argument say that laws are vulnerable to courts which may overturn them, as happened most notably in Massachusetts, and this threat necessitates the step from law to constitutional amendment. Many also call for the majority to decide rather than judges and speak for a balance of power between legislative and judicial branches of government, as is evident in this statement by the Senate Republican Policy Committee:

The only way to ensure that the American people, rather than judges, decide this fundamental question about the future of marriage in America is to offer them the opportunity to consider and ratify a constitutional amendment through their state legislatures.

- Senate Republican Policy Committee report, Arizona Republic, 6/04/06

Politicians, activists, and the generic “supporters” or “opponents” attribution are most likely to occur with the Judicial Activism arguments, according to regression analysis. This frame is used in about 40% of articles in which politicians and activists are identified as speakers, and a full 82.1% of the articles where a frame is attributed to “supporters” or “opponents”.

Interestingly, the top arguments on both sides directly concern same-sex marriage, while all proposed amendments prohibit not just marriage but other legal unions granting similar rights. Many were concerned with unions, but the debate on both sides focused specifically on marriage.

Looking at arguments used less often, there is a break in this trend (though with exceptions). On the anti-amendment side, arguments focus on civil unions and other practical, legal concerns. Conversely, arguments used to support amendments continue to focus on the merits of same-sex marriage as a moral and legal equivalent to heterosexual marriage. The fourth most popular anti-amendment argument mentions potential “unintended consequences” for heterosexual couples brought on by language that proscribes legal protection for unmarried couples (19.2% of articles). Activists and “supporters” or “opponents” are most likely to predict presence of this frame, with these speakers and frame co-occurring in 44% of all articles. Those using these arguments are clear that they oppose amendments not for their prohibition of same-sex marriage but for the “marriage plus” provisions, implying (or explicitly stating) that they would support such measures if the language were limited to marriage, as does this “ordinary citizen” in a letter to the Wisconsin State Journal:

Ban same-sex marriage if you want, but don't allow this amendment to pass. This amendment goes too far. Who's to say that the basic rights and protections that gay and straight couples alike rely upon won't be invalidated by the passage of this amendment?

- Josh Beck, Wisconsin State Journal letter, 3/2/06

Next in popularity is an argument that stresses the harm restrictive measures would have on existing same-sex families, saying that these families are already a fact of life, and the government must support them (16.3% of all articles). The speakers whose presence is most likely to predict present of this frame are clergy and ordinary citizens. Co-occurrences with this pro-family frame are lower than seen with other speaker/frame combinations, at 36.1% for clergy and 20.8% for ordinary citizens. In a broader sense, this code is also applied when speakers stress the importance of family life and the symbolic meaning of marriage, saying that all people should be encouraged to form long-lasting, stable commitments, be they homosexual or heterosexual. This argument is exemplified by Dr. Jack Rogers in a commentary published in the Charleston Post & Courier:

As a church, we are called to support marriage and family life, yet Amendment I causes enormous hardship for the thousands of families led by same-sex couples in South Carolina...Granting these couples permission to make a lifelong commitment to each other through marriage would be good for their children and society.

- Jack Rogers, professor of theology emeritus at San Francisco Theological Seminary, Post & Courier commentary, 10/1/06

On the pro-amendment side, another popular argument invokes religion generally or the Bible specifically to say that same-sex marriage is counter to these values (9.7%). This argument is illustrated in a comment made by Mickenzie Stuart, and Idaho teenager, in the Idaho Statesman:

Marriage is a God-given right, and God intended it to be between a man and a woman.

- Idaho Statesman, 2/19/06

Unsurprisingly, regression results suggest that clergy are likely to use this argument and cross-tabulations show that 44.4% of the articles in which clergy are cited, the Bible/ Religion frame is present. However, another possibility is that clergy themselves do not use this argument, but that articles in which it is present also discuss the views of clergy members, perhaps to counter arguments over what the Bible says about homosexuality and marriage. The presence of ordinary citizens in articles also predicts the presence of this frame, but co-occurrence between this speaker and frame is only 10.4%. What is notable about this argument, in my view, is its relative unpopularity. While it is the third most popular pro-amendment argument, overall it ranks tenth, behind nearly all anti-amendment arguments. Despite my predictions, then, explicit references to religion are shown not to be dominant in the debate over same-sex marriage amendments.

To respond to opponents' claims that amendments would affect heterosexual couples or business' ability to provide for domestic partners, proponents using the Not Needed/ Special Rights frame contend that there simply *is* no public right to partner benefits in any relationship other than heterosexual marriage (9.2%). An example of this is provided in a letter to the editor by a Virginia resident:

Why should people be given rights based upon their behavior as though they have no choice about whom they have sex with?

Granted, some factors that occurred against the individual's will may contribute to same-sex preference. Nevertheless, sexual preferences don't warrant civil rights. I support the marriage amendment for marriage between one man and one woman.

- Latonya Sterling, Virginian-Pilot letter, 6/01/06

Proposed amendments do not take away rights then, because all citizens are able to receive them by “simply” marrying someone of the opposite sex. This argument is a reaction to LGBT rights proponents’ claims to place the issue within broader identity politics seeking cultural recognition (Fraser 1997). The presence of politicians, activists, or judges/lawyers/experts in articles predicts the occurrence of the Not Needed/ Special Rights frame, though co-occurrence with these speakers is lower than found for other frame/speaker combinations (politicians 21.0% co-occurrence; activists 30.3%; experts 36.6%).

Next, countering Pro-Family arguments, speakers for the amendment maintain that children are best raised in families with both a mother and a father, and no allowance should be made for families diverging from this standard (7.0%). Government should stand for the ideal, proponents say, and all other family forms are inferior to the mother-father nuclear form. Nathan Sproul and activist supporting Arizona’s proposed amendment used this argument when he said:

I think the majority of Arizonans would agree that children being raised in a family of one man and one woman - a husband and a wife - is the environment we want to have in Arizona.

- Arizona Daily Star, 12/22/05

In the logistic regression on this frame yielded no speakers as significant predictors of this argument, and cross-tabulations showed that the highest rate of co-occurrence was

when journalists attributed statements to “supporters” or “opponents”. Again, like the Bible/ Religion frame, the argument that children need a mother and father is not used as often as one may expect.

Rounding out the arguments put forth against same-sex marriage are those I call Not a Threat (12.7%) and Separation/ Privacy (12.0%). The thrust of the former frame is that same-sex marriage is not a threat to society, at least compared to divorce, financial pressures, and infidelity. Those invoking this frame sarcastically refer to “anti-divorce” amendments or point to places where same-sex marriage or civil unions are legal and cite their success. They also ask, as does this letter writer,

How would civil unions, domestic partnerships, and even marriage of same-gender couples affect my marriage?

- Joan M. Prest, Richmond Times-Dispatch letter, 3/9/06

Finally, the low prevalence of Separation (of church and state)/ Privacy arguments is a surprising finding of this study. This code includes both references to the First Amendment and more general invocations of citizens’ right to privacy from the government in intimate relations, exemplified in this call by an editorialist for the Memphis Commercial Appeal:

Keep God above politics. Trying to legislate good morals and a God-fearing nation at the ballot box diminishes the power of faith and overestimates the power of government.

- Chris Peck, Editorial, Memphis Commercial Appeal 8/06/06

It was thought that the debate would center on the role of government in regulating such religious territory as marriage, but it seems that few actually made reference to these

ideas. The presence of the author as a speaker of a frame is a significant predictor for both the Not a Threat and the Separation/ Privacy arguments, and the latter argument is predicted as well by citation of clergy and ordinary citizens.

On the pro-amendment side, the Slippery Slope argument had the least prevalence (2.5%). One such argument was made by a letter writer in South Dakota, when he said:

We only need to look at Canada, where gay marriage is accepted and they are now considering legalizing polygamy.

– Rick D. Greb, Argus Leader, letter to editor, 6/11/06

With only 15 articles in which this frame is present, no one speaker stands out as using this frame. The low prevalence of this argument contradicts predictions from the literature, specifically those made by Ashbee (2007) that public debate over homosexuality is moving away from religious opinions and towards arguments that legal protections for same-sex relationships would constitute a “slippery slope” that would open the door for legalized polyamory, bestiality, and even incest.

Variation by State and Region

A central question of this study is the extent to which the debate over same-sex marriage varies by state. Chi-square tests show significant variation by state for many of the anti-amendment arguments, but not for those in support of proposed amendments. On the anti-amendment side, variation is statistically significant for the Pro-Family, Not a Threat, and Unintended Consequences frames. Cramer’s V scores of 0.15 to 0.24 show only weak association between state and these frames, yet this relationship does exist¹⁹.

¹⁹ To add support to this relationship, variation within state by newspaper was tested as well, resulting in only a few statistically significant differences in the frames used by state. There was no pattern

Calls to defeat amendments because of concern for families were most prevalent in South Carolina (present in 23.7% of articles) and Wisconsin (21.0%). Citizens in Tennessee and Idaho asserted more often than those in other states that same-sex marriage is not a threat to heterosexual couples or society as a whole (22.6% and 17.9% of articles, respectively). Finally, the Unintended Consequences frame was used most often by citizens in Virginia and Arizona (30.6% and 29.0% of articles, respectively). On the pro-amendment side, while there are differences by state in proportion of articles containing each frame, these differences are not statistically significant.

Again chi-square tests show significant variation by region in use of anti-amendment arguments but variation for only one pro-amendment frame. Interestingly, the three frames that varied significantly by state – Pro-Family, Not a Threat, and Unintended Consequences – show statistically insignificant difference by region. Conversely, the Tolerance, Separation/ Privacy, and Change/ Constitution arguments significantly vary by region but not state. Cramer's V scores for these frames range from 0.10 to 0.13, showing weak association between region and frame. Arguments that invoke tolerance occur most often in the West/Mountain region (37.0% of articles). In the two states that comprise this frame, Arizona and Idaho, this frame was quite popular (38.7% and 36.0%, respectively), indicating that for this argument at least, region is an appropriate categorical framework.

Variation by region is also significant for the Separation/ Privacy frame, however, the states comprising the South where this frame is most popular (14.9%) vary significantly among themselves. While residents in Tennessee and Virginia use the

to these relationships, however, suggesting that state is a coherent unit of analysis. This issue will be examined in further analysis.

Separation/ Privacy frame frequently (15.1% and 16.5% of articles), South Carolinians rarely use the frame (1.9%). For this frame, then, regional variation can be traced back to states rather than a trend among a unified region. The same result is found with the popularity of the Change/Constitution frame among citizens in the Midwest (South Dakota and Wisconsin).

On the pro-amendment side, the Judicial Activism frame is found to vary significantly by region, though the association is weak with a Cramer's V of 0.10. This frame is most prevalent in the southern states of South Carolina (21.1%), Tennessee (20.8%), and Virginia (21.5%). For this frame, then, region is a useful way of grouping state data.

These results of variation by state and region are ambiguous. While variation is statistically significant for some frames, for many it is not. Additionally, region is shown not to be a useful way to group data: in some cases there are patterns of frame use by region, but in most cases there are not. Grouping by state, however, is more robust. Tests of within-state variation by newspaper show no significance, while there are variations detected between states. A weakness of these analyses is the many states with low overall articles published about same-sex marriage. Newspapers in Arizona, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee published less than 100 articles on Sundays and Thursdays during the sample period, making comparison difficult. For further analysis, then, these states are excluded. Additionally, analysis categorizes data by newspaper source rather than grouping by state to show in detail the profiles of framing same-sex marriage in Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Focused State Analysis: Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin

To begin the analysis of variation among the three states of Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin, frequencies of each frame among these states is compared to the overall frequencies in all states. In all cases, frequencies for this subset vary by at most three percentage points with overall seven-state data, and most vary by one percentage point or less. Thus, there is not a big difference in this subset as compared to the whole sample of seven states.

Next, chi-square tests are repeated first grouping data by state, then by individual newspaper source. Two frames that vary significantly between all states, anti-amendment Pro-Family and Unintended Consequences, also vary between Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin. These frames show significant variation by source, with Cramer's V scores of 0.17 (pro-family) and 0.16 (unintended consequences) indicating weak association. In a change from the full sample analysis, the Not a Threat frame does not vary significantly by state or source in the subsample.

Additionally, differences that were not detected when testing significant variation between all states are brought out. The Separation/ Privacy frame varies between states in the subsample. It is most popular in Virginia, where it is used in 16.5% of articles, as compared to Wisconsin (13.7%) and Idaho (6.7%). A few frames – Tolerance, Change/ Constitution, and judicial activism vary by newspaper source rather than state. A look at conditional frequencies shows that these frames are particularly popular in one or two newspapers but are stable in the rest. The Tolerance frame, for example, appears often in the Idaho Statesman (37.9% of articles) and the Wisconsin State Journal (36.0%) but is found only about 23% of articles in the other four papers. Like the full sample analysis,

variation is found more among anti-amendment frames than those supporting constitutional amendments. In fact, Judicial Activism is the only pro-amendment frame where any significant variation is found, and this is when analyzed by newspaper source rather than state.

To further explore the varied use of frames both for and against proposed constitutional amendments, I present mean predicted probabilities for each frame by newspaper source. These probabilities were found by running binomial logistic regressions on each frame, setting newspaper source as the independent variable and controlling for date and day of publication, locality of authorship, and speakers present in article. All regression models were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Examination of predicted probabilities by newspaper source shows two trends. First, there is patterned variation for some frames by newspaper source and state. Figure 1 shows this trend for the anti-amendment frames Unintended Consequences, Change/Constitution, Pro-Family, and the pro-amendment frame Child Needs Mom & Dad. With these frames, the predicted probabilities are similar within each state but vary between states. Newspapers in Virginia, for example, are most likely to present the Unintended Consequences frame, followed by the two papers in Virginia and finally the Idaho Statesman. This contrasts with the Change/Constitution” frame, which is most common in the Wisconsin papers and least common in the Virginia papers.

The other two frames that follow this trend are the anti-amendment Pro-Family argument and the pro-amendment argument that children are best raised both a mother and a father. These frames are theoretical opposites, one arguing that all families are (or at least can be) beneficial to children and the other saying the traditional heterosexual

family is superior for children and all others can be detrimental. Predicted probabilities, however, show that these two arguments are popular in different states. The former Pro-Family frame is found most often in Wisconsin newspapers and least in the Virginia papers, while the opposite is true for the Children Need Mom & Dad” frame.

Figures 2 and 3 present the second trend found in mean predicted probabilities by newspaper source. These frames still vary significantly by newspaper source²⁰, but do not show patterned state variation. The Equality/ Rights frame, for example, is most common in articles published by the Wisconsin State Journal, but is more popular in the Idaho Statesman and the Virginian-Pilot than in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, which is also published in Wisconsin.

Another feature of frames that follow this trend (or, rather, this anti-trend), is that predicted probabilities vary less overall than those that follow the first trend. For frames following the first trend, the average difference between the source with the highest predicted probability and that with the lowest is 0.16. For the second trend, this figure is 0

²⁰ T-tests between the source with the highest predicted probability and that with the lowest confirm significant variation.

DISCUSSION

Moral Discourse

Previous scholarship has divided discussion of LGBT rights into two categories – equal rights vs. traditional morality (Brewer 2003a; Hull 2006; Price, Nir, and Capella 2005; Tadlock, Gordon, and Popp 2007). My analysis of debate over same-sex marriage amendments has found that contemporary discourse encompasses much greater diversity of arguments. While the frames I call Equality and Definition/Building Block make up a majority of frames used (57.3%) they are not the only frames used, and nearly half of all arguments are unaccounted for by the Equal rights/ Traditional Morality dichotomy. I found that citizens also considered values of tolerance and respect for diverse family forms, and the role of government in expanding or restricting the rights of its citizens.

What I did *not* find, contrary to what was suggested by Ashbee (2007), was evidence of an increase in the “Slippery Slope” argument. This frame was present in only 15 articles in my sample (2.5%), and its presence could not be explained by my regression model. This suggests that it occurs at random and is used idiosyncratically.

My findings support Brewer’s (2003b) proposal that Americans are changing the values they use to evaluate LGBT issues. While equality and traditional morality continue to be used, speakers in my study incorporated values of tolerance, family, and privacy from government in their discussion of same-sex marriage. For Swidler (1986), the influence of culture on action depends on whether people live in “unsettled” (adaptation) or “settled” (resistance) times. The evidence from my study suggests that

those opposing amendments are adapting their cultural notions of tolerance, family, and the role of government to the new visibility of same-sex couples with families while those who support amendments resist these adaptations and assert the desirability of traditional family forms and restricting rather than expanding rights to citizens.

My study is also able to flesh out what people mean when they talk about “traditional morality” with respect to same-sex marriage. Speakers of the Definition/ Building Block frame take an essentialist view of marriage: it *is* one man and woman, it always has been, and it always should be²¹. The focus is on “traditional” rather than “morality” – tradition is spoken of as the justification for moral statements. This contrasts with use of the Bible/ Religion frame, where speakers explicitly reference religious authority to support their moral statements.

In fact, where religious morality was referenced, it was most often used to *oppose* restrictive marriage amendments rather than support them. Many speakers who invoked the Tolerance and Separation/ Privacy frames used religious language to explain their opposition to proposed amendments. They spoke of their God’s respect for all people and the importance of civil separation of religious and secular authority.

Another interesting feature of the frames used to discuss same-sex marriage amendments was the coupling of marriage and civil unions, particularly by those who supported the amendments. All states’ amendments proposed to prohibit both legal statuses for same-sex couples, so by the time amendments reached the general public they were already joined. Close reading of the arguments used in support of amendments confirms that most speakers accepted and endorsed this coupling. Those using the

²¹ Of course, historical accuracy is not necessarily the basis of tradition (Schudson 1992). As Coontz as shown, the idyllic man/woman/2.5 children family of American lore was never a historical majority among American families (Coontz 1992)

Definition/ Building Block frame, for instance, spoke of marriage as *the* institution upon which society is built and that legal partnerships that don't carry this name would harm the special status of this institution. Likewise, users of the Children Need Mom & Dad frame argued that children do best with two heterosexual parents who are joined by marriage and any other union is below standard and thus should not be endorsed by society.

On the anti-amendment side, many speakers explicitly separated the issues of same-sex marriage and civil unions. The Unintended Consequences frame was defined by its separation of these two issues, with citizens arguing that their state's amendment went "too far" and would harm both gay and straight couples who were not married. In fact, it was the strategy of a number of anti-amendment campaigns, most prominently in Arizona, to stress the unintended consequences of amendments rather than address same-sex marriage per se (Cobb 2006; Geis 2006). This separation was also a central feature of the Pro-Family frame, where speakers stressed the need for legal protections for existing families headed by same-sex couples. While some who used this frame also argued for extending the symbolic meaning of marriage to same-sex couples, many focused solely on legal rights for families and children.

While separation of same-sex marriage and civil unions was a feature of some frames, many speakers treated them as the same. Most prominently, speakers of the Equality frame said that all Americans should be treated equally; marriage should be a right extended to all couples, gay and straight. Those using the Tolerance frame likewise rarely distinguished between marriage and other types of legal partnership.

Another way to organize anti-amendment arguments used to discuss same-sex marriage amendments is along a continuum from total promotion of same-sex marriage to opposition based on amendments' wording (Figure 4). Most speakers who used the Equality frame supported total rights whereas those using Tolerance, Not a Threat, Separation/ Privacy, and Pro-Family frames showed more qualified support. These speakers argued against the restriction of rights on existing couples but stopped short of regarding same-sex couples as fully equal to heterosexual couples. Next on the continuum is the Change/ Constitution argument in which citizens say that attitudes will change and the Constitution is not the place to set marriage policy. Many of these speakers said essentially that laws restricting marriage to heterosexual couples is fine for now, but the next generation may feel different. Finally on the continuum is the Unintended Consequences" frame which focuses on the "marriage plus" aspects of amendments while accepting marriage restrictions.

On the pro-amendment side, speakers all reject the idea of same-sex marriage rights and civil unions but for different reasons. The Judicial Activism frame is a legalistic argument about the role of government and separation of powers, while the Bible/ Religion argument claims that a particular religious authority is most important for guiding marriage laws. Speakers of the Children Need Mom and Dad and Definition/ Building Block frames look to tradition to support their visions of what is best for children and society and believe that their state constitutions should support these ideals. In the neutral space on the continuum is the argument that amendments are distractions from "real" issues. Speakers of the argument generally refuse to express an opinion on either side of the issue.

State Political Culture and Moral Discourse

The story told by my analysis of debates over same-sex marriage amendments reveals a complex picture of state political cultures. I found evidence of variation for some frames and uniformity for others. Nearly all pro-amendment arguments can be regarded as national because they do not vary by state. Only the Children Need Mom and Dad frame showed any state variation, and this was in my comparison of newspapers from three states rather than the full sample. This frame did vary in a patterned way by state, occurring most in Virginia and followed by Idaho and Wisconsin. However, variation among these states was minimal; the highest and lowest predicted probabilities of occurrence were only separated by 0.086 points. My figure showing predicted probabilities for the rest of the pro-amendment frames likewise shows a limited range of disparity. With the exception of the Children Need Mom and Dad frame, then, pro-amendment frames do not evidence particular state political cultures. Rather, they are national frames.

On the anti-amendment side, there is more evidence for state political culture as an influence in frame use. Three of the seven anti-amendment frames show significant variation by state in the full sample, and this regressions performed using the subsample of three states show that variation is patterned for three frames. The Change/Constitution, Pro-Family, and Unintended Consequences frames were used to different degrees by newspapers in Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin. The results of this analysis provide the strongest evidence for state variation because I controlled for newspaper source as well as other features of articles such as local authorship and focus of article (state or national). For residents in Wisconsin, the proposed marriage amendment was

about change and family more than it was for those in Idaho and Virginia. In Virginia, by contrast, it was more about the unintended consequences the amendment may have on all married couples, more so than for those in Wisconsin or Idaho.

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

My study of contemporary discourse about same-sex marriage in the U.S. has a number of strengths and weaknesses. First, the states included are well distributed throughout the country without strong clustering in any one region. The states are diverse as to population size and make-up, yet they share political features that allow for adequate comparison. Importantly, citizens in all seven states voted on similar amendments at the same time, so while each operated within the context of a national debate about same-sex marriage, they carried out their own debates about policies in their own states.

Another strength of my study is the specificity of my frame coding. Other studies about same-sex marriage (Hull 2006; Tadlock, Gordon, and Popp 2007) and LGBT rights (Brewer 2003a) include at most four frames while I identified fourteen unique frames with two “other” categories. I achieved this specificity while maintaining reliability. With these rich data, I presented a more detailed picture of the debate over same-sex marriage amendments than any yet put forward. These data also allowed me to examine differences in debates in each state in order to understand its implications to state political cultures.

There are a few weaknesses to note as well. First, few articles about same-sex marriage were published in newspapers in four states: Arizona, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Tennessee. This limited the amount of cross-state comparison I could do to three states. Second, and related, is the restricted generalizability of my findings. My

study is specific to time and place so that while I discovered much about debates in the seven states of my study, I cannot generalize these to the rest of the U.S. I also cannot measure change in discourse over time. Future studies may build on my 2006 findings by examining discourse from 2004 elections and earlier, as well as possible later debates. Third, while the seven states in my study were well distributed regionally, I was not able to include any West Coast or Northeast states. There may exist frames in these states that did not appear in those of my study, or at least varying degrees of frames I found.

Another weakness comes from my classification of frames. I attempted to capture as many different arguments as possible while maintaining the reliability of my coding scheme. Through this process, I necessarily had to group statements that were logically related but distinct. For example, the Separation/ Privacy frame includes both statements invoking the separation of Church and State and statements that speak to government control of private lives. Often distinct statements such as these were grouped when speakers themselves uttered something in the middle, such as “the government shouldn’t stick its nose where it doesn’t belong, that’s why we have the separation of Church and State”. While the final coding scheme produced reliable results, then, I sacrificed capturing the full nuance of all arguments.

While these weaknesses serve as important caveats to my study, I believe that they are outweighed by this study’s strengths.

CONCLUSION

In November 2006, eight states voted on proposed constitutional amendments to define marriage and restrict other legal protections for unmarried couples. The presence of these amendments on state ballots sparked a debate within each state that did not before exist to such a degree. Journalists reported on the campaigns both to pass and to defeat the amendments, quoting activists, politicians, clergy, experts, and ordinary citizens in their news stories. Columnists and editorial staffs wrote opinion pieces expressing their take on the issue. And citizens wrote letters to the editors of their local newspapers, responding to stories and letters with their own arguments.

The choice placed before voters was a simple up or down vote, but the debate sparked by this choice was multifaceted. Contrary to previous research, I found that this issue was about much more than equal rights or traditional morality. The frames used in these debates are both cultural innovations and resistance. Some citizens proposed adapting the cultural norm of marriage to include same-sex couples while others suggested separating the legal, civil aspects of marriage from those that are symbolic and religious. Still others staid away from the issue of marriage and focused instead on practical solutions to existing families. Many citizens argued against proposed amendments on the grounds that they represented an extension of the province of government that should be resisted.

Most who argued to pass proposed amendments evidenced resistance to what they saw as an unwelcome social change. They said that the traditional definition of marriage

as one man and one woman is a foundation for society and that this tradition should be encoded in the constitution. Others argued that decision by courts to extend marriage to same-sex couples represents an innovation in the role of this branch that should also be resisted and guarded against. Citizens supporting proposed amendments reinforced traditional families from both moral and legal standpoints.

As I have shown, Americans in different states did not react the same to proposed constitutional amendments. Together, these variations in how residents debated same-sex marriage amendments mean slightly different cultural repertoires in the states studied. For residents in Idaho, Virginia, and Wisconsin, the site of these differences is their interpretation of amendments as “about” change and the role of the Constitution, the role of the government in promoting diverse families, and the extent that unmarried couples, both gay and straight, should be reprovved.

At the time of this writing, three states will vote on constitutional amendments to restrict marriage to one woman and one man, and three more states are considering such amendments in their legislatures. One of these states, California, recently legalized same-sex marriage through a court decision. It is clear that this issue is alive and well. As we look ahead to future debates over same-sex marriage and other morally charged issues, we can expect these debates to vary slightly in according to the state in which they take place. Americans will continue to grapple with the ways they want their government to respond to moral issues in the public sphere, and will both draw from and mold the cultural repertoires of their communities.

TABLES

Table 1: Frequencies of Speakers, N=600

Speaker	Frequency	% of all Articles
Ordinary Citizen	284	47.3
Politician	100	16.7
Activist	76	12.7
Author of Article	73	12.2
Judge/Lawyer/Expert	41	6.8
“Supporters” or “Opponents	39	6.5
Clergy	36	6.0
Other/ Unspecified	11	1.8

Table 2: Summary of Frame Directions by Type of Article, N=600

Direction of Frame	News	Editorial/ Commentary	Letter to Editor	Total
Against Amendment Only*	38 19.2%	64 51.2%	188 67.9%	290 48.3%
For Amendment Only*	22 11.1%	17 13.6%	68 24.6%	107 17.8%
For and Against or Political	85 42.9%	35 28.0%	13 4.7%	133 22.2%
No Frame Found	53 26.8%	9 7.2%	8 2.9%	70 11.7%
Total	198 100%	125 100%	277 100%	600 100%
Average (Median) # of Frames	2.2(2)	2.7(3)	2.1(2)	2.2(2)

*Includes presence of Distraction/Political frame along with at least one directional frame

Table 3: Frames to Debate Same-Sex Marriage Amendments, N=600			
Frame	Description	Freq.	% of all Articles
Anti-Amendment:			
Equality/ Rights	Marriage is a civil right; prohibition of same-sex marriage is tantamount to discrimination.	217	36.2%
Tolerance	In a diverse society, it is important to be tolerant of all people; as a moral value this is paramount. Restrictive marriage legislation is just mean; its purpose is only to unfairly punish gays.	176	29.3%
Change/ Constitution	It is inappropriate to use the Constitution to institute policies of the moment. It will only make it harder for future generations to reverse.	119	19.8%
Unintended Consequences	The amendment will affect unmarried heterosexuals as well. There will be unintended consequences because it goes further than just marriage.	115	19.2%
Pro-Family	Expanding marriage to same-sex couples is pro-family and will protect children of these unions. Society should promote the morality of living in committed relationships for all people.	98	16.3%
Not a Threat	Same-sex marriage is not a threat; it will not affect anyone but the couples and families involved.	76	12.7%
Separation/ Privacy	The separation of church and state in the Constitution means that religious views of marriage are irrelevant. This amendment is government intrusion into private lives.	72	12.0%
Other Anti-Amendment	All arguments not included in other codes.	4	0.7%
Pro-Amendment:			
Definition/ Building Block	Heterosexuality is essentially part of the definition of marriage; allowing same-sex couples to marry would change this definition. Heterosexual marriage is a building block of society.	127	21.2%
Judicial Activism	An amendment is a chance for citizens to decide their laws before judges do.	99	16.5%
Bible/ Religion	The Bible says that marriage is only for a woman and a man. Less specific – my religion says it's wrong, heterosexual marriage is a Judeo-Christian value.	58	9.7%
Not Needed/ Special Rights	Same-sex couples can get all the rights that married couples have; they don't need marriage. Homosexuals are looking for special rights and/or marriage is not a right they are entitled to.	55	9.2%
Children need Mom and Dad	Children are best raised by heterosexual married couples. The government should support only this relationship.	42	7.0%
Slippery Slope	Allowing same-sex couples to marry is a slippery slope that could lead to group marriage, polygamy, bestiality, etc.	15	2.5%
Other Pro-Amendment	All arguments not included in other codes.	1	0.2%
Neutral:			
Distraction/ Political	This is a political distraction from other more important issues. This issue is being used to gain superficial support for one party.	73	12.2%

* Reflects presence in article of at least one pro or con frame

Frame	Cramer's V	States with most occurrence	State with least occurrence
Unintended Consequences	0.24*	VA 30.6% AZ 29.0%	SC 5.3% TN 0%
Pro-Family (anti-amendment)	0.16*	SC 23.7% WI 21.0%	SD 5.6% VA 7.4%
Not a Threat	0.16*	TN 22.0% ID 7.9%	SD 0% AZ 3.2%

*p<0.05

Frame	South n=165	Midwest n=223	West/ Mountain n=212	Total n=600
Tolerance** V: 0.13	47 22.2%	68 30.5%	61 37.0%	176 29.3%
Separation/ Privacy* V: 0.11	31 14.6%	31 13.9%	10 6.1%	72 12.0%
Change/ Constitution* V: 0.10	31 14.6%	54 24.2%	34 20.6%	119 19.8%
Judicial Activism* V: 0.10	45 21.2%	34 15.3%	20 12.1%	99 16.5%

*p<0.05

FIGURES

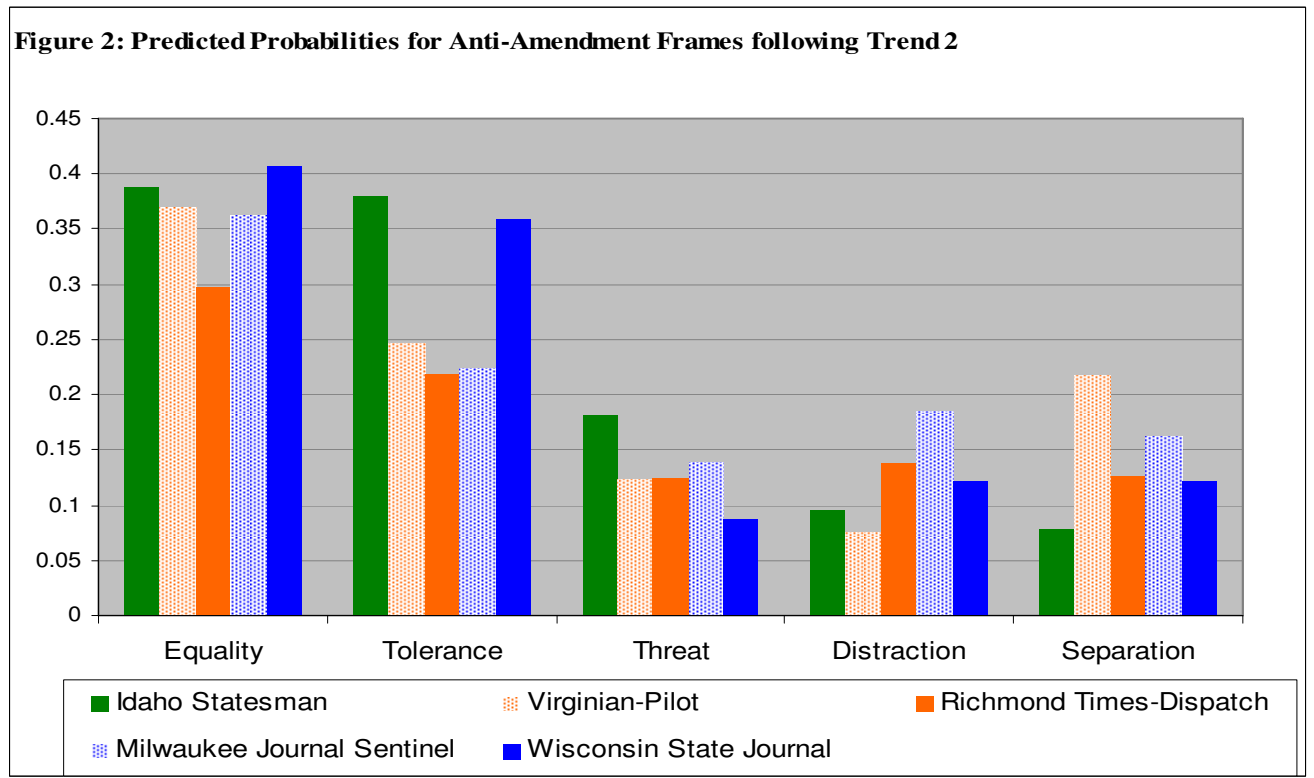
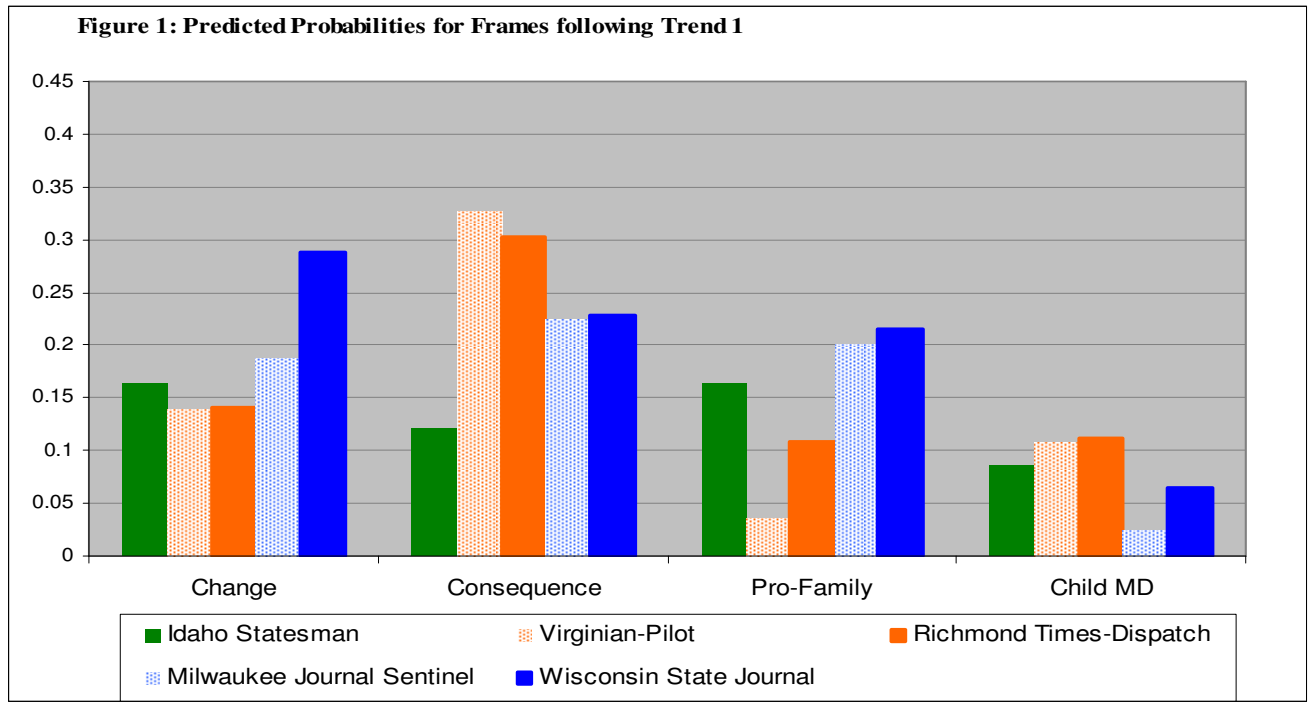


Figure 3: Predicted Probabilities for Pro-Amendment Frames following Trend 2

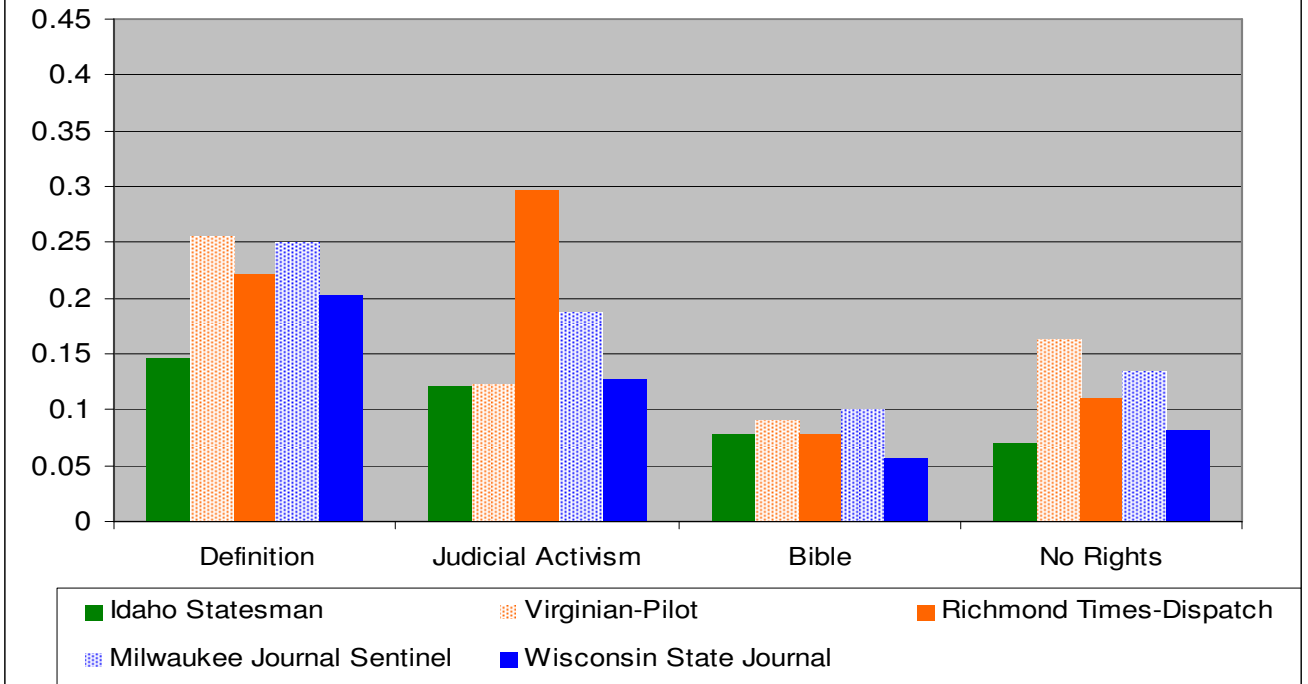
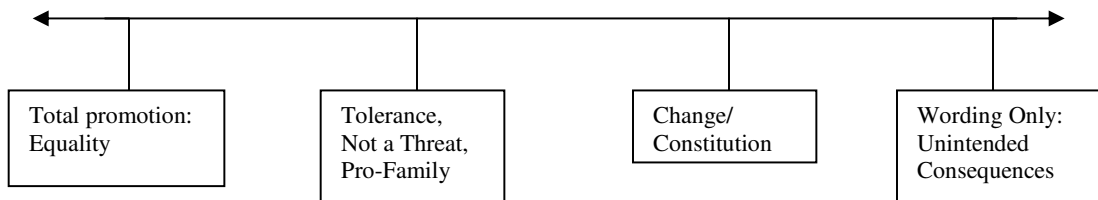


Figure 4: Anti-Amendment Frame Continuum



APPENDIX A: Text of Proposed Amendments

Arizona, Proposition 107:

“To preserve and protect marriage in this state, only a union between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage by this state or its political subdivisions and no legal status for unmarried persons shall be created or recognized by this state or its political subdivisions that is similar to that of marriage.”

Idaho, Joint Resolution 2:

“A marriage between a man and a woman is the only domestic legal union that shall be valid or recognized in this state.”

South Carolina House Joint Resolution 3133:

This resolution would amend the state constitution to read, “Marriage in the state of South Carolina, and its political subdivisions, is exclusively defined as a union between one man and one woman; all other attempted or putative unions, including those recognized by other jurisdictions, are void *ab initio*.”

South Dakota House Joint Resolution 1001:

“Only marriage between a man and a woman shall be valid or recognized in South Dakota. The uniting of two or more persons in a civil union, domestic partnership or other quasi-marital relationship shall not be valid or recognized in South Dakota.”

Tennessee Senate Joint Resolution 31:

“Any policy or law or judicial interpretation purporting to define marriage as anything other than the historical institution and legal contract between one man and one woman is contrary to the public policy of this state and shall be void and unenforceable in Tennessee. If another state or foreign jurisdiction issues a license for persons to marry and if such marriage is prohibited in this state by the provisions of this section, then the marriage shall be void and unenforceable in this state.”

Virginia, Ballot Question 1:

“That only a union between one man and one woman may be a marriage valid in or recognized by their commonwealth and its political subdivisions. This commonwealth and its political subdivisions shall not create or recognize a legal status for relationships of unmarried individuals that intends to approximate the design, qualities, significance, or effects of marriage. Nor shall this commonwealth or its political subdivisions create or recognize another union, partnership, or other legal status to which is assigned the rights, benefits, obligations, qualities, or effects of marriage.”

Wisconsin, Joint Resolution 53:

“Only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state. A legal status identical or substantially similar to that of marriage for unmarried individuals shall not be valid or recognized in this state.”

APPENDIX B: Newspapers included for Analysis

State	Newspaper	2006 ²² Daily Circulation	2006 Sunday Circulation	Articles in Sample
Arizona	The Arizona Republic	452,016	574,798	20 3.3%
	The Arizona Daily Star	113,296	174,427	11 1.8%
Idaho	Idaho Statesman (Boise)	54,866	86,132	116 19.3%
	Lewiston Morning Tribune	24,199	25,846	18 3.0%
South Carolina	The State (Columbia)	116,401	149,987	26 4.3%
	The Post & Courier (Charleston)	98,845	109,121	12 2.0%
South Dakota	The Argus Leader (Sioux Falls)	54,489	75,751	15 2.5%
	Aberdeen American News	16,493	18,061	3 0.5%
Tennessee	Tennessean (Nashville)	173,304	241,017	23 3.8%
	The Commercial Appeal (Memphis)	161,627	216,705	30 5.0%
Virginia	The Virginian-Pilot (Norfolk)	201,163	234,706	57 9.5%
	Richmond Times-Dispatch	190,139	229,240	64 10.7%
Wisconsin	Milwaukee Journal Sentinel	244,591	434,100	80 13.3%
	Wisconsin State Journal (Madison)	109,657	150,616	125 20.8%
Total		2,011,086	2,720,507	600 100%

²² SRDS 2006

APPENDIX C: Demographic, Religious, and Political Information for included States

	Arizona	Idaho	South Carolina	South Dakota	Tennessee	Virginia	Wisconsin
Election Outcome	48% yes	63% yes	78% yes	52% yes	81% yes	57% yes	59% yes
Eligible Voter Turnout ²³	40%	44%	36%	59%	42%	45%	54%
Legislature	Republican	Republican	Republican	Republican	Split	Republican	Republican
Governor	Democratic	Republican	Republican	Republican	Democratic	Democratic	Democratic
2005 Population ²⁴	5,829,839	1,395,634	4,113,961	746,033	5,810,890	7,332,608	5,375,751
Non-Hispanic White	60.2%	86.9%	65.7%	87.0%	78.1%	68.3%	86.0%
Black	2.9%	0.4%	28.5%	0.8%	16.3%	18.9%	5.7%
Hispanic	28.6%	9.1%	3.3%	1.9%	3.0%	6.0%	4.5%
Other Minority	8.3%	3.6%	2.5%	10.3%	2.6%	6.8%	3.8%
Urban ²⁵	88.2%	66.4%	60.5%	51.9%	63.6%	73.0%	68.3%
Evangelical Protestant ²⁶	9.5%	9.0%	29.4%	13.8%	37.0%	17.1%	12.7%
Mainline Protestant	4.4%	5.1%	13.3%	28.9%	9.7%	13.1%	14.8%
Catholic	19.0%	10.1%	3.4%	24.0%	3.2%	8.6%	31.6%
Other	7.1%	24.3%	1.5%	1.0%	1.2%	2.8%	1.4%
Unclaimed	60.1%	51.5%	52.4%	32.2%	48.9%	58.4%	39.6%

²³ Pillsbury, Johannesen, & Arp 2006

²⁴ 2005 Population with racial/Ethnic breakdown from American Community Survey (US Census 2007)

²⁵ From 2000 Decennial Census (US Census 2007)

²⁶ From Religious Congregations and Membership in the United States 2000 (GRC 2002)

APPENDIX D: Coding Protocol

1. Case ID
2. Source:
 - 1 Arizona Republic
 - 2 Arizona Daily Star
 - 3 Idaho Statesman
 - 4 Lewiston Morning Tribune
 - 5 The State (Columbia, SC)
 - 6 Post & Courier (Charleston)
 - 7 Argus Leader (Sioux Falls)
 - 8 Aberdeen American News
 - 9 Tennessean
 - 10 Commercial Appeal
 - 11 Virginian-Pilot
 - 12 Richmond Times-Dispatch
 - 13 Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
 - 14 Wisconsin State Journal
3. Date (MMDD)
4. Section
 - 1 National/International, frequently section A
 - 2 Local/State, frequently section B
 - 3 Editorial/Commentary
 - 4 Other
5. Author/Compiler:
 - 1 Local – member of Newspaper staff
 - 2 Guest Columnist
 - 3 Associated Press or other News Wire
 - 4 Undetermined/both local and wire
6. Type of Article:
 - 1 News
 - 2 Editorial or Op-Ed/Commentary
 - 3 Letter to the Editor

7. Focus of Article: What the vast majority article is about. The gist of the article. If you were to tell someone else about this article, what would you tell them? The focus of the article takes into account the whole text of the article, giving particular weight to the title. Examples are articles reporting on a campaign rally in which same-sex marriage is discussed, movement of proposed amendments (passing the legislature, etc.), or debates about moral issues in which same-sex marriage is discussed. In order to count as the focus, at least 2 paragraphs must contain discussion about specifically same-sex marriage. If this is not the case, use code 6.

- 1 Proposed State Amendment or law in own state
- 2 Federal Marriage Amendment
- 3 Proposed amendment or law in other state
- 4 Same-Sex Marriage (general)/Homosexuality
- 5 Court Ruling/ Case
- 6 Mainly issue other than same-sex marriage.

8. Frame: First frame encountered in article. A “frame” is the primary logic used to justify one’s argument. As such a frame presents both an argument (“marriage is a civil right”) and a justification (“all citizens are entitled to the same civil rights”). It is NOT a frame to say, e.g., “I do not believe in same-sex marriage,” there must be a reason offered. Frames may be short or long; there is no specified length. Do not include the title as a frame. Sometimes you may need to read a few paragraphs to catch a frame.

What is not a frame:

1) Presentation of opposing arguments in order to tear down that argument (setting up a straw man). Such as: “supporters of this amendment say that they it is necessary to preserve families, but a true pro-family law would be to legalize same-sex marriage.” This would be coded only once as pro-same sex marriage. An essential part of coding frames is to couple speaker and frame – the person invoking the frame is arguing a specific point, and this is reflected in the frame coded.

In editorials, particularly, presentation of opposing arguments may be extended. If an opposing argument is 2 paragraphs or more, code it. If it is less than 2 paragraphs, it is a “straw man” and not coded.

2) Statements of fact – these may implicitly go to support an argument, but there must be an explicit frame used for coding.

Code each article for all frames present. Each frame should be attributed to a speaker. Any one speaker may present many frames, code for presence each type of speaker.

Against Proposed Amendment

Equality/Rights:

Marriage provides material, legal protections and benefits, and all members of society should have access to these protections and benefits.

More generalized equality – gay people are no different than straight people, deserve equal rights. Prohibiting same-sex couples to marry is discrimination. Gay rights are civil rights.

This code does NOT include rights mentioned specifically in connection to families (family code) or heterosexual unmarried couples (unintended consequences). The intent of this argument is the individual rights of gays and lesbians. Be careful though not to read too much into intent – anything general like “denial of rights” should be take this code.

The focus is on civil equality as a value in itself.

Key words: “civil rights”, “second-class citizens”, “discrimination” amendment”, “equal rights”, “fair”, “justice”

Tolerance:

We should tolerate and accept all people; as a moral value this is paramount. Restrictive marriage legislation is just mean; its purpose is only to unfairly punish gays.

This is different than the “equality/rights/discrimination” in that no specific mention of rights is made – the focus is on tolerance as the main value (even if one disagrees with the person) rather than equality. Any time the amendment is mentioned as “mean” or “hurtful” this code should be used. The idea is that the amendment seeks to punish gays and lesbians.

It is also different from the “privacy” code in that no mention is made to the role of government – the idea is that citizens living together decide on what is right for their society, not that government does this or that.

The focus of this code is moral tolerance, frequently mentioning religion, rather than civil equality.

Also included here is the sentiment that the amendment is bad for business or the idea that people will move away because it sends a message of intolerance.

Key words: “tolerance”, “diversity”, “liberty”, “impose values”, “mean”, “hateful”, “hurtful”, “bad for business”, “drive out business”, “neighbor”, “bigot”, “community”

Separation/ Privacy:

The separation of church and state in the Constitution means that whatever the Bible says about same-sex unions is irrelevant for our laws.

There is (or should be) a separation between religious and civil marriage – churches can decide whatever they want about marriage, but as a civic institution marriage (or civil unions with the same rights as marriage) should be open to all committed couples.

Government shouldn't intrude in people's private lives. This amendment is too intrusive. The amendment goes too far in restricting the private sector from offering benefits. This amendment may drive people out of the state.

Key words: "first amendment", "separation", "establishment", "intrusion", "private sector", "legislate morality"

Note: "legislate morality" is more specific than "impose values" – in the latter, one is choosing her values over another's; in the former, a government is legislate a morality that is agreed upon by many. "Imposing values" is a more pluralistic view of morality than "legislating morality".

Change/ Constitution

Currently public opinion may be against gay marriage, but this is likely to change.

It is inappropriate to use the Constitution to institute policies of the moment. A law is okay for now, but amending the Constitution is too much. It will only make it harder for future generations to reverse. This code also includes reference to anti-miscegenation laws – as in "we used to think interracial marriage was wrong to, but it changed"

An amendment isn't needed because there is already a state law. We don't have to worry about activist judges in our state.

The focus of this argument is future change, with the idea that we need to keep debating the issue. Reference to interracial marriage is made to point to how opinion on that issue changed. Should code as Equality/Rights if mention is made to the civil rights movement to argue for current rights for gays and lesbians.

Key words: "shackle future generations", "interracial marriage", "permanence of Constitution", "stop debate", "already state law"

Pro-Family:

Legalized same-sex marriage would protect children of homosexual unions. Expanding marriage to homosexuals is pro-family.

Note: this code includes the mention of “family discrimination” – the argument is that all families should have rights, and is distinguished from the Equality in which rights are individual or couple.

Same-sex couples deserve full marriage rights because they are loving and committed like anyone else. Nothing less will suffice. They are entitled not only to the legal protections of marriage but to the symbolic meaning.

Marriage is the moral thing to do for all long-term couples, gay or straight. Society should promote the morality of living in committed relationships. Allowing gays to marry will promote morality for all of us – this is one step further than “not a threat”; that is, marriage for all will only be honored and respected more if gays marry.

Also included in this code is a rejection of the “children need a mother and father” argument – families of all types exist and should be respected. Also rejection of the idea that marriage is strictly about children – it is about loving couples.

Key words: “protect all families”, “family discrimination”, “loving couples”, “commitment”

Note: mention of “loving” and/or “committed” couples uses this code if the argument is that they are together anyway and therefore deserve legal protections, or that this is a symbol of their love – if the argument is that these couples deserve rights *if* they want them, then it is the “equality/rights” code – using the “pro-family/marriage” code involves a moral imperative to commitment.

Not a threat:

Same-sex marriage is not a threat; it will not affect anyone but the couples and families involved. The world will not end. Also included in this code are arguments that gays don’t destroy marriage – mention of divorce, cohabitation, etc.

Key words: “outlaw divorce instead”, “nothing will change”

Unintended Consequences:

The amendment will affect unmarried heterosexuals as well. There will be unintended consequences because it goes further than just marriage.

The wording of this amendment is unclear and it will be left to courts to sort out what it does and does not intend to restrict.

This amendment will have far-reaching consequences that of which people should be aware.

This code includes references to civil unions or heterosexuals, that is, it is okay to outlaw marriage, but unions should be allowed.

Key words: “heterosexuals – gay or straight couples”, “vague”, “too much”, “overkill”

Other – pro marriage

For Proposed Amendment

Not Needed/ Special Rights:

Same-sex couples can get all the rights that married couples have; they don't need marriage. Homosexuals are looking for special rights and/or marriage is not a right they are entitled to. (This code is different from “marriage is essentially a woman and a man”, must specifically refer to rights.)

This amendment won't change anything; no rights will be taken away. Fears about “unintended consequences” are overblown. Also, it is inappropriate to compare this to anti-miscegenation laws; racism is clearly discrimination but sexual orientation/preference is different.

Key words: “unnecessary”, “anyone can marry”, “extra benefits/rights”

Bible/ Religion:

The Bible says that marriage is only for a woman and a man. Less specific – my religion says it's wrong, heterosexual marriage is a Judeo-Christian value.

Homosexuality is wrong/immoral, it shouldn't be encouraged by the State.

Note: any reference to “unnatural” falls under this code only if it is mentioned with specific reference to god or a religion, otherwise code as “Building Block”

Key words: “God/Jesus/anything religious”, any Bible verse, “sin”, “immoral”

Children Need Mom and Dad:

Children are best raised in heterosexual unions; same-sex marriage is bad for children. Restricting marriage to heterosexuals protects families.

Key words: “pro-family”, “protect children”, “protect families”

Definition/ Building Block:

Heterosexuality is essentially part of the definition of marriage; allowing same-sex couples to marry would change this definition (strictly for heterosexual couples, no mention of group marriage, bestiality, etc.).

Heterosexual marriage is a building block of society. This argument goes beyond pro-family to claim that hetero marriage is an important for society as a whole. Bedrock, destruction.

This includes the sentiment that marriage is a special thing and that widening the definition would cheapen marriage as a whole. Therefore same-sex marriage is a threat to society as a whole (opposite of code 7).

Key words: “protect marriage”, “tradition”, “history”, “important to society”, “natural”

Slippery Slope:

Allowing same-sex couples to marry is a slippery slope that could lead to group marriage, polygamy, bestiality, etc.

Key words: “polygamy”, “polyamory”, “slippery slope”

Judicial Activism:

An amendment is a chance for citizens to decide their laws before judges do.

More general (e.g., if it is about a court case) - The people/majority should decide what marriage is, not judges or other liberal elites. A court is not the appropriate place to make/change laws. This argument can look like the anti-amendment “Change/Constitution” frame, in that both say that the people should decide. However, those arguing “Judicial Activism” argue FOR an amendment (to stop courts) while those arguing (Change/Constitution) are AGAINST an amendment (to stop the majority/legislature) – that it, it depends who is the perceived enemy.

Also state’s rights: our state shouldn’t be influenced by federal judges or laws.

Key words: “majority”, “liberal judges”, “let people decide”

Other – anti marriageNeutral**Distraction/Political Ploy:**

This is a political distraction from other more important issues. This issue is being used to gain superficial support for one party.

Key words: “Red herring”, “play to the base”, “throw red meat to the base”, “bring people to polls”

No frame found

9. Speaker – The speaker is the person presenting the frame. If it is the author of the article, no source will be referred to at all. A source can be referred to either by direct or indirect quote.
 - 1 Journalist/member of news staff – for commentary or news item, this is the author of the article (part of prose).
 - 2 Politician or official (includes appointed officials, e.g. Attorney General).
 - 3 Member of activist organization (or organization itself)
 - 4 Member of clergy
 - 5 Judge/Lawyer/Expert – someone with a title (other than clergy or politician)
 - 6 “Ordinary” citizen – anyone else referred to or quoted, must be presented as typical. Letters to the editor are coded as ordinary citizen, not author.
 - 7 Generic “supporters” or “opponents”
 - 8 Other/Unspecified

For people with multiple designations, e.g. a clergy member who is the head of an activist organization, follow this hierarchy:

Politician
Clergy
Judge/Lawyer/Expert
Activist
Ordinary Citizen
Journalist/Author

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