

The Implications of Homosexual Marriage among LGBT Communities

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ABSTRACT: *According to the findings of this research, the significance assigned to legally recognized same-sex marriage by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) men and women, as well as the effect on their understanding of the LGBT community, is examined. Participants in an open-ended web-based survey (N = 288) were asked to examine the ways in which legalizing same-sex marriage might have a good or negative impact on members of the LGBT community. This study reveals a multilayered understanding of legally recognized same-sex marriage, with an overall theme of equality starting to form a surface over deeper dialogical themes trying to describe tensions in the psychological impact of same-sex getting married on same-sex intimate relationships, on the LGBT community, and on relationships between members of the LGBT community as well as heterosexual people. According to the results of the research, same-sex wedding should be regarded as a framework for any future discussions about married and unmarried same-sex relationships, regardless of their sexual orientation.*

KEYWORDS: *Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian, Same-Sex Marriage, Transgender.*

1. INTRODUCTION

On 18 November 2003, the Supreme Court of Massachusetts (SJC) held that there could be no "constitutionally reasonable grounds for refusing civil marriage to same-sex couples" and ordered the state after 180 days of stay to start issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples. The SJC judgement represented a turning moment in the US-wide battle for and against homosexual marriage for over ten years. Although other states and municipalities have been granting civil protection privileges for same-sex couples for many years, the SJC judgement was the first time that equal-sex partners were given the same civil marital protection as heterosexual couples under law[1], [2].

Right after that historic decision, the popular media broke into discussions and discussions about the legal and moral implications of this shift in the definition of marriage, but the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) community's relation, identity and culturally implications received little attention. Although prior studies examined how LGBT people have a meaning of heterosexual marriages and marriages and non-matrimonial forms of same sex relationships, researchers have never been able to investigate how LGBT people give meaning in the context of this large-scale social change to legally recognized same sex marriages[3], [4].

This research investigates how homosexual, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered men and women see the effect of legally accepted homosexual marriages on their LGBT knowledge and experience. Participants were asked to reflect on, rather than on individuals or couples, the effect of legally recognized homosexual marriage on the LGBT community because of the unique links between LGBT people, the same sex couples and the LGBT community. The 'community' has been characterized as being present on various levels from an energetic group of pals to the people of a

shared homosexual ghetto to a mainly imagined group of persons of the same sex desire.

While heterosexual couples also experience relationship processes in a wider social setting, researchers point out that same-sex couples have a unique kind of impact on their relationships, because the same-sex couples form part of a minority group characterized by relationship and sexual choice. Same-sex couples often have acceptability exclusively in the LGBT community, rely on specialized services from community groups and/or negotiate their independence of the community owing to heterosexual pressure, or to preserve their relationships. As such, the connections between homosexual couples and the LGBT community were complicated and the involvement of couples and people in the group was diverse.

However, the possible consequences of legally recognized marriage between the same sexes may be so broad that this institution can redefine the dynamics of the LGBT community system. Therefore, the significance of this new occurrence should be taken into account in connection to the experiences of LGBT participants while the meanings given to homosexual marriages should offer insights into participants' perception of the LGBT community itself [5]–[7].

In examining the topics emerging when LGBT community members were asked to consider ways of affecting LGBT community positively and adversely by legally recognized same-sex marriages, this study gives a 'real-time' picture of social change in defining and recognizing and understanding homosexual romantic relationships. The status of legally-recognized same-sex marriage is multilayered with a broad theme of equality that overrides deeper dialectical themes that describe the tension in the perception of the influence of same-sex marriage on same-sex romantic relations, the LGBT community, and the relationship between the LGBT and heterosexual others. The results indicate that same-sex marriage should be taken into account in any future discussion of same-sex relationships between married and unmarried people [8]–[10].

The notice of recruiting told prospective participants that the research was undertaken to better understand what LGBT people felt about the legal legalization of homosexual marriage and that participation would require them to complete an anonymous web-based survey. A URL for the web-based survey was given to interested participants. The welcome page for the survey emphasized the project's objective that the participation was anonymous and instructed. A number of open-ended questions were asked, followed by demographic items and closed-ended ones.

This study examines the meaning of same-sex marriage in the context of the LGBT community experiences of participants and therefore two of the open-ended items have an interest in this study. After the survey was finished, participants saw an end screen thanking them for their participation and asking them to submit their research URL to other LGBT members who were interested in joining.

The answers of the participants to both issues of interest have been examined utilizing a grounded theory based inductive approach. When such a data-driven method is used, themes arise instead of conceptual categories from the answers of the participants. Responses to each question have been analyzed and sub-themes recorded using coding methods provided by academics. Until saturation was achieved, an ongoing comparison procedure was used to compare new sub-themes. No new sub-topics were then discovered and nearly all answers fit into a sub-topic.

During the study, conceptual relationships between the sub-themes were identified and the

development of themes informed. Additional measures have been made to guarantee the legitimacy and reliability of the data analysis as well as the continuous comparison process. A colleague with experience in qualitative techniques examined the data and coding outcomes and agreed on the data fit to the subtopics and themes in order to further verify the validity of the coding process.

Five members of the LGBT community were invited to examine the sub-themes and topics in order to verify the authenticity of the coding and verified that the descriptions matched their living experiences with same-sex marriage. The author then studied the subjects and produced a theoretical narrative to better explain the findings.

2. DISCUSSION

Data analysis showed that participant's ascribed significance in four obvious and strong themes to legally recognized homosexual marriage in regard to the LGBT population. Almost everyone cited the first of these ideas, legal equality, which was the surface topic of a deeper understanding of same-sex marriage. The other three themes were revealed as dialectic strains beneath the original surface of legal equality and represented conflicting expectations of how the same-sex marriage affects homosexual interactions, the LGBT community and the relationship between the LGBT community and heterosexuals. The findings are presented using extracts from the participants' answers that are cited verbatim to prioritize their voices. The samples selected are typical of several answers.

Almost every participant said that legal recognition of the same-sex marriage represents for LGBT people an element of legal equality and this has been considered to have a greater impact on the LGBT community. The issue of legal equality should not be unexpected because LGBT advocacy organizations such as the Mass Equality and the Human Rights Campaign have advocated homosexual marriage as an essential way to put a stop to discrimination against LGBT persons in the US. There were three sub-themes covering legal equality: first-class citizenship, financial advantages and family security.

The first subtopic, first-class nationality, was the conviction of participants that the legal recognition of the same-sex marriage signals the end of the different legal safeguards and treatment of LGBT and heterosexual American citizens. One attendee emphasized the end of the 'citizenship of second class,' 'We've got the same rights now as everyone else. They can't claim we're second-class or no longer just as deserving of legal rights.' Another one said, "This finally makes us true Americans. It demonstrates that we are Americans being married is part of our basic rights in America." The idea of same-sex marriage as a vehicle for first-class citizenship was so powerful that it disregarded the relational elements of marriage and defined marriage solely in a legal sense instead.

Two sub-topics relating to additional anticipated advantages from legally accepted homosexual marriage were also stated on the subject of legal equality: financial rewards and family safeguards. The participants first embraced the financial advantages of homosexual marriage. One said, 'It implies that the same sex couples may now get tax savings and other financial benefits such as having the ability to share property, to be married.' Many participants highlighted the financial advantages of health and insurance equality.

For instance, 'Now couples may share health insurance and that is really essential, particularly for elderly couples or if one spouse cannot work.' Participants also saw legal equality as a way of enhancing the safety of LGBT families. A remark of one participant mirrored concerns of many participants in homosexual couples with kids, "Being allowed to marry helps couples with kids or who wish to have children. It should assist a great deal with adoptions if the pair can claim that they are married. It will ensure that all LGBT families are protected by law." Others were thinking forward in times of distress for the safety of families. For instance, one participant said, "It implies that I can take care of my partner if anything awful occurs, or when we're older, like making medical choices, since everyone has to acknowledge me as his partner."

While almost everyone agreed that same-sex marriage should at least in part be viewed as a means to achieve legal equality for LGBT persons in the US, legal equal treatment was not the only way that participants saw homosexual marriage. Legal equality was acknowledged as an essential and beneficial aspect of the LGBT community, and legal equality language was comparable to that expressed by same-sex marriage supporters in the public arena.

However, participants' perception of homosexual marriage and its anticipated impact on the LGBT community went beyond legal equal treatment and were shown to be contrary to the new phenomena and the couples, the LGBT community and the connection between the LGBT community and heterosexuals. There were more comprehensive and diverse explanations of these extra topics than those related to legal equality, and legal equality is an overarching subject, and these dialectic issues are placed under legal equity's outward veneer in deeper, richer and more contentious levels.

Participants indicated their conviction that same-sex marriage will make homosexual couples more serious and enhance same-sex unions. For example, one participant viewed homosexual marriage as giving gravity to both those who married and those who don't. 'Marrying helps couples to feel closer and strengthens their relationships. Couples who don't get married at once will discover that they may strive towards a meaningful relationship in the future since one day they are able to get married. Others believed that same-sex couples would establish better connections because institutionalizing same-sex partnerships would provide a structural barrier to relational breakdown.

For example, 'Marriage makes individuals more serious about a relationship and realizes that they must work on it, rather than simply leave when things become hard. Gays will now have to consider their relationships more solid and permanent since weddings exist.' Other reactions relate to a stronger LGBT community as a consequence of same-sex marriage: 'Same-sex marriage implies that our relationships will be more solid and strengthen our community considerably.'

Although individuals viewed same-sex matrimony leading to more serious same-sex couples, they also voiced the contrary notion by saying that equal-sex marriage might also foster fancy connections. Many expressed worry that the thrill of having married for the first time officially acknowledged may lead to same sex couples marrying for 'false reasons.' 'Same-sex marriage, for example, might become an issue for couples and the whole society if individuals get married for the wrong reasons. Like, if people married because they can simply do it now, or if you are gay or lesbian now, it seems like that hip thing to do. Another person said, "It's wonderful to have the option to marry, but not if individuals get married without thinking long and hard about their lifelong commitment.

Researchers believe marrying will be a trend for a time." Others worried the possibility of homosexual couples marrying for political purposes. For example, 'A issue with gay marriage is that individuals may marry the community out of obligation because they have gained the right or protest against others who believe that we should not marry because we are homosexual. For example, ' Those aren't going to be good marriages.'" Participants thus thought that same-sex marriage had effects in contrast to same-sex partnerships: to make them more serious and imaginative. Participants also stated that these relationship impacts would also have an impact on the LGBT community. The second dialectical topic emerging from the views of the participants on homosexual marriage reinforced the emphasis on LGBT communities.

While the LGBT Group was perceived to strengthen same sex marriage with the sub-themes of validation and togetherness, participants were also opposed to the notion that same-sex marriage weakened the community. Two sub-themes highlighted the significance of equal sex marriage as something that hurts the LGBT community: stigmatization and assimilation. The stigmatization of homosexual, bisexual, and/or transgender experience in current replies is different from that typically given in research by the LGBT community which distinguishes one from the norms of mainstream/heterosexual society. Rather, the participants foresee that same sex marriage would lead to the establishment of a stigmatization system in the LGBT community, because marriage becomes the rule and the stigma is left single. One participant describes the following:

The same-sex marriage establishes marriage as the ultimate relational aim and invalidates other forms of relationship and love in the society. People will begin to wonder what's wrong with you if you have a wonderful relationship and you don't get married, and if you say you don't see marriage as something you want to have. Finally, some saw the assimilation possibilities of same-sex wedding as weakening LGBTs as a means of integrating heterosexual relationship cultures into the same-sex marriage process. "Marriage itself is, as one participant argued, an essentially defective institution. It's patriarchal and makes individuals believe they own others. The LGBT community has purchased this now." Another said, 'I simply believe that same-sex marriage is what we wanted all along and all the awful things that happen in straight relationships, such as abuse and divorce, are OK with us. We are not as powerful as a community today because we don't oppose the mainstream, we want to be part of it.'

Participants stated their conviction that acknowledged homosexual marriage may assist in many ways enhance the connection between the LGBT population and heterosexual others. Many saw same-sex marriage as a useful public relations weapon for the LGBT community, which would increase community acceptance by the heterosexual mainstream. One example is the following comment from the participants that the same sex marriage would not only alter the community, but the way the community is seen by those outside. When right people see that we wish to marry, they must understand that the promiscuous preconceptions of homosexuals are incorrect. Basically, same-sex marriage will assist in the straight community to decrease homophobia». Another said that the same sex marriage would assist to decrease the stress experienced by sexual minorities, as it contributes to the reduction of the misunderstandings and the rejection of heterosexuals. Marriage makes relationships and families more apparent and makes them ignore beyond the community. As well as helping to alter the views of LGBT people of heterosexual others, same-sex couples were regarded as a way to improve LGBT/straight partnerships by promoting accepting LGBT connections.

For example, 'Same-sex marriage truly counts our connections. Straights can no longer ignore us, and I believe most of them would accept us more if they realize that we are as they are married.' The concept of acceptance was also expressed more personally: It would be great if wedding made straight people more like homosexuals in general but when you look at it on a smaller scale, I believe it actually matters, like seeing families. If you get married, your straight family can more easily accept and integrate your spouse with the family, since you can comprehend and accept marriage. Same-sex marriage exposes our society, particularly from Conservatives and the media, to public scrutiny. I mean that there has never been a homosexual divorce rate and now public awareness is going to come when we disintegrate and data on straight divorce are published in the same manner, but in our case these stats are used as 'evidence' that we should not have been allowed to marry. It puts a lot of pressure on people who marry to remain together and on the whole community to ensure that we don't throw fuel to the fire.

Others voiced worry that same sex marriage will compel the LGBT visibility to grow and thus raise physical and verbal assault risk. For instance, 'Same-sex marriage is likely to offend many uneducated individuals there. Everybody in your city will know that if you get married you are a lesbian or gays couple, and that somewhere could be like putting a target on your head. Same-sex marriage is also a setting in which the connection between partners is formed. Partners in all sorts of connections may be understood by setting up a system of rules, expectations and conduct inside the relationship to create a single framework for their relationship. This concept of context creation is especially relevant when discussing newly married homosexuals as they have an additional benefit/burden of context creation in a kind of partnership that did not exist before. As these relational structures are developed in the early dyads of same sex, a new benchmark may be anticipated to look at the new occurrence of same-sex marriage. Furthermore, non-marrying same sex couples will also affect the environment of same-sex marriage by contributing to the determination of what this new phenomenon is not.

Thus, marriage between the same sex and context is best viewed as not an external force and not the result of connection, but as both at the same time. This is the example of the same-sex marriage of a fundamental notion of dialectics: practice. Praxis is defined by researchers as the notion that individuals are 'actors and objects of their own activities.' The concept of practice relates to same-sex marriage and to the LGBT community, as the participants in the research are not. The dialectical themes emphasized not only the contradictory and mutually interconnected meanings of the same sex marriage, but also that the LGBT community defines same-sex marriage and at the same time redefines the meaning of the LGBT community. This interaction is shown by participants' knowledge of homosexual marriage at the three interdependent levels of the LGBT partnerships and their relationships with heterosexuals.

3. CONCLUSION

In the introduction to a new special issue in personal relations, which focuses on the importance of understanding the influence of contexts in studies of relations with individuals, researchers emphasized that contexts were conceptualized in two ways: firstly, as a set of structural and cultural forces that combine to influence the processes of relationships, and secondly, as are both context perspectives apply to marriage between the same sex as a framework for understanding relationships between same sex. Although many types of household partnerships and civil union have been accessible in recent years to homosexual couples at certain US places, Massachusetts

was the first to get the same civil benefit from the same-sex pair on 17 May 2004 as married heterosexual couples. Same sex marriage therefore establishes a new legal, social and symbolic entity that may serve as a counterbalance to the establishment of marital connections or to the defining of unmarried partnerships between same sex partners. It is essential to note that the future of same-sex marriage started in Massachusetts at the time of this data collection with legal battles, which would certainly continue, while other states such as Oregon and Minnesota went on to and against same-sex marriage at the national level. As the institution of homosexual Marriage spreads, changes or matures, the evolving position of this phenomenon will continue, but one conclusion of this study will remain constant: same-sex marriage should be understood as a complex cultural and personal phenomenon to be regarded in future as a context for the understanding of homosexual relationships.

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