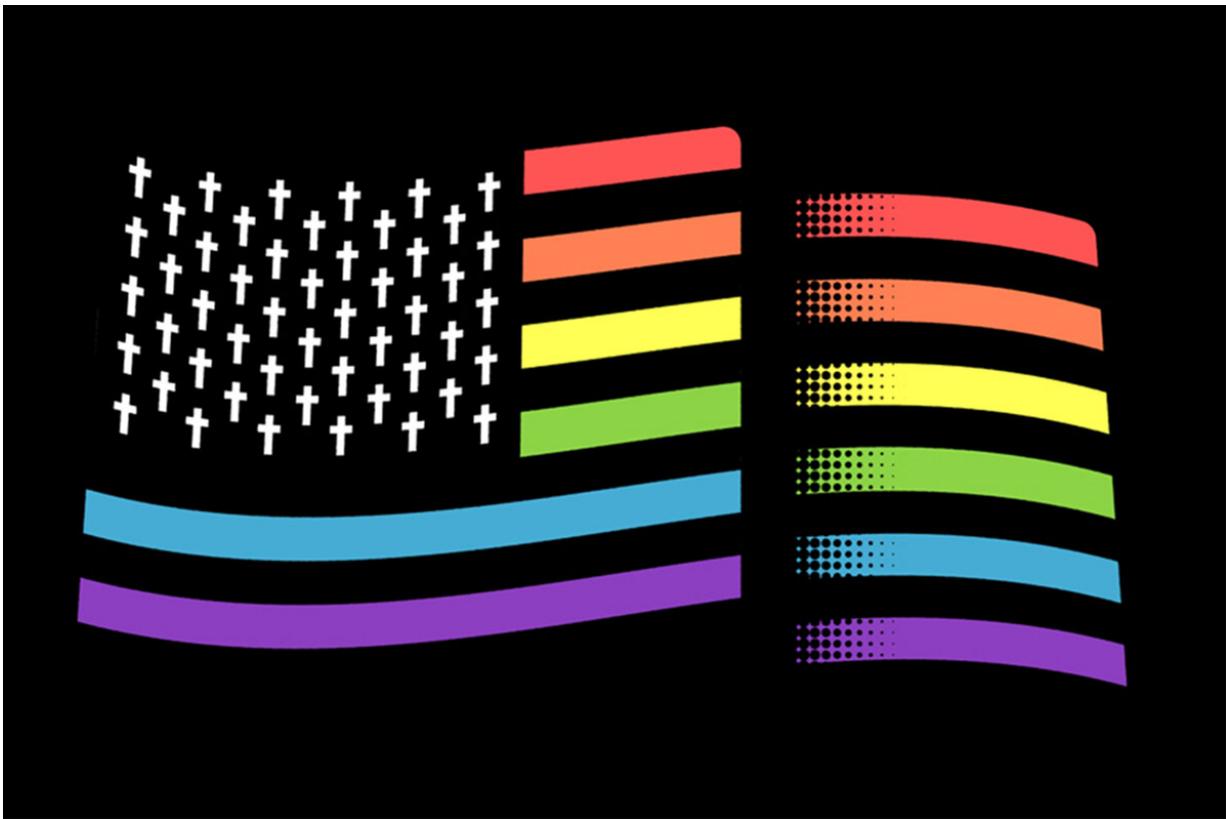


Opposition to sexual- and gender-minority rights linked to support for Christian dominance

June 11 2020, by Diana Yates



A new study finds that political and Christian conservatives and others who support Christian dominance in the U.S. also tend to endorse restricting the rights of sexual and gender minorities. Credit: Michael B. Vincent

Many Christian and political conservatives in the U.S. support legislation to deny sexual and gender minorities the rights most Americans enjoy: unfettered access to jobs, housing, services and public facilities; the opportunity to marry as they choose; and the right to adopt a child.

A new study published in the *American Journal of Community Psychology* offers insight into the factors that correlate with support for such laws. The study asked 1,015 heterosexual college undergraduates who self-identified as either Christian (68%) or nonreligious a series of questions to determine their thoughts and attitudes about Christian privilege and power in American society. The researchers also asked whether participants supported or opposed efforts to curtail the rights of sexual and [gender minorities](#).

"Although same-sex marriage is now the law of the land in the U.S., there continue to be problems with [employment discrimination](#), housing discrimination and other types of discrimination against sexual and gender minorities," said Nathan Todd, a psychology professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign who led the study. "One of the key barriers to those rights has been opposition from some Christian and political conservatives. We wanted to know whether people's ideas about [political power](#) explain some of this opposition."

Todd and his colleagues evaluated participants' take on Christian power and influence in society. The students were asked to rank how strongly they agreed or disagreed with statements such as: "To be Christian is to have religious advantage in this country." Or, "Christianity is valued more in this society than other religions."

The researchers also asked participants whether Christians "should have religious advantage in this country," or if Christianity "should be valued more in this society than other religions." These questions differentiated

participants' awareness of advantages conferred to Christians in the U.S. from the belief that such advantages are right and should exist, Todd said.

Because Christian practices and traditions are so embedded in American life and politics, identifying as Christian confers a lot of privileges, he said.

"People who are Christian are not singled out or asked to speak for their religion on a regular basis, as members of other religions often are," Todd said. "Christians in the U.S. do not face systemic bias or violence based on their religion and they do not live in fear of this type of experience."

Other advantages stem from the fact that government and school calendars revolve around the Christian sabbath and Christian holidays. A large majority of elected officials also identify as Christian.

"All of these factors work together to the advantage of Christians," Todd said.

Participants also rated their support or opposition to specific sexual- and gender-minority rights, such as the right to marry, to adopt children or to have equal access to jobs and housing, and to use public bathroom facilities that align with one's gender identity. They also rated how strongly they identified as political conservatives, and Christian students rated how strongly their religious beliefs aligned with conservative Christian views.

"Our analyses revealed that opposition to sexual- and gender-minority rights was correlated with Christian and political conservatism, and with the belief that Christians should be the dominant group in society," Todd said.

Further analyses suggested that greater support for Christians being the [dominant group](#) in power in the U.S. partially explains why Christian conservatives and political conservatives oppose sexual- and gender-minority rights, he said. These findings were consistent across Christian and nonreligious students.

"Our goal with this study is not to antagonize or demonize political or Christian conservatives, but to learn more about what drives them to support or oppose sexual- and gender-minority rights," Todd said. "I also think it's a mistake to characterize all Christians as thinking or acting the same way, especially as some Christians do support rights for sexual and gender minorities."

Todd said he hopes the research will increase constructive dialogue by promoting a broader understanding of the relationship between Christianity, politics, and sexual- and gender-minority rights.

More information: Nathan R. Todd et al. Christian and Political Conservatism Predict Opposition to Sexual and Gender Minority Rights through Support for Christian Hegemony, *American Journal of Community Psychology* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/ajcp.12420](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12420)

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