

PUBLIC RELIGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE

**RELIGION AND SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN CALIFORNIA: A NEW
LOOK AT ATTITUDES AND VALUES TWO YEARS AFTER
PROPOSITION 8**

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ROBERT P. JONES: Hello and welcome to the press conference to release our new poll for the Public Religion Research Institute on taking a new look at attitudes on religion and same-sex marriage in California.

The Public Religion Research is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, nonpartisan, research and education organization that specializes in work at the intersection of religion, values and public policy. And we'd like to welcome everyone here in the room today. We also have a number of people online – on conference call and welcome you as well and thank everyone for your interest in the results that we have coming out today.

I'll tell you a little bit about the poll and then I'm going to hit a couple of highlights, myself, and then I want to introduce the other members of our distinguished panel. So I am Robert P. Jones. I am the CEO of Public Religion Research Institute. After me will be speaking Daniel Cox, who is the research director at Public Religion Institute. After that will be the Rev. Madison Shockley, who is the minister of the Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Carlsbad, California. And then finally we will have Professor Diane Winston, who is the Knight Chair in Media and Religion at the University of Southern California at the Annenberg School of Communication. So thank you, all of our distinguished panelists, for being with us today to comment on the poll.

Just a couple words about the poll. This is a statewide public opinion survey conducted Public Religion Research Institute. The interviews were conducted between June 14th and June 30th and we interviewed over 3,000 Californians in a random sample of Californians statewide. The poll is distinguished by a number of very fine-grained looks and intimate portraits of the religious community in California. And it's one of the major contributions of the poll. It's really given us not only a look at where Californians as a whole are on same-sex issues in California but where the religious community is on the same sets of issues.

I want to begin with a couple of top-line results that I'll then unpack in terms of the community in California. First of all, we asked people to think back – we're in 2010; we're two years out from Proposition 8 – we asked people to think back about the Proposition 8 battle and how their own views have shifted over time and to think about how they would evaluate, themselves, the effects of Proposition 8 this far out from the vote.

Interestingly enough, we found that only one in five Californians state that the passage of Prop 8 was a good thing for the state of California. This is true even among those who were staunch and strong supporters of Proposition 8 – for example, among white evangelical Protestant Christians, among whom seven in 10 supported Prop 8, less than a majority say it was a good thing for California, even among these stronger groups.

The other interesting finding was that we asked people to think back about their own views, how their views have changed over the last five years. And what we found there is that a significant portion of Californians report that their views have shifted.

So about a third of Californians say their views have shifted significantly over the time period. And among that group who say their views have shifted, there is three times as many who report their views have shifted in a more supportive direction of gay and lesbian rights than report their views have shifted in a more opposing direction on same-sex rights.

So that's 25 percent, a quarter of Californians reporting that over the last five years, their views have become more supportive of gay and lesbian rights versus only 8 percent who report that their views have shifted over this time and have become more opposed.

We asked also a question about if people were to reconsider Proposition 8 today, how would they vote? So if there were a similar measure on the ballot, how would they vote? And we found that a majority of Californians say that if the vote were held today, they would vote to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry in California. So this is a significant shift.

And you could also see a number of different views among religious groups. As I said, one of the main contributions of the polls really paint a nice portrait of where religious Californians are on these issues. And one finding that I think stands out is that the debate is often framed as secular-liberal against conservative-religious people in California. And one thing that our data clearly shows is that this is not the case; that the religious community itself is basically split on these issues.

And on a strongly-supported side, you have white mainline Protestants, which is Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans, that group of folks, the white mainline Protestants, solid support, 54 percent saying they would vote to allow gays and lesbians to marry. And 57 percent of Latino Catholics reporting that they would allow gay and lesbian couples to marry if the vote were held today. White Catholics are also a majority. They look basically like the general population, with 51 percent saying they would vote to allow same-sex couples to marry.

And then there are three religious groups on the other side, so African-American Protestants, white evangelicals and Latino Protestants. Among African-American Protestants, 58 percent said they would vote to keep same-sex marriage illegal. Among white evangelicals Protestants, as I mentioned, seven in 10. And that's also true for Latino Protestants; 7 in 10 reporting they would vote to keep same-sex marriage illegal if the vote were held today.

So there's a clear divide in the California religious community over these issues. And we see similar patterns across issues. Just a couple of items I'll point to here in terms of other demographics breaks in addition to religion. We find an interesting split between Republicans on the one hand and Democrats and Independents on the other.

The Democrats and Independents tend to be much more closely clustered and supportive on allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry. Republicans stand out for being seven in 10 opposed. But Independents are much closer to Democrats in their opinions than they are to

Republicans. And this is true across a range of issues that have to do with rights for gay and lesbian couples supportive than men, and younger Californians more supportive than older Californians.

But certainly part of the story here is that we're two years out from Proposition 8. We've had two more years for people who are 16- and 17-year-olds now be 18-year-olds and part of the adult and voting population in 2008, and that crowd is overwhelmingly supportive of rights for gay and lesbian couples to marry.

I'm just going to go ahead to the next piece here. We had an interesting finding. One of the things that we were trying to do is really understand what people's concerns were around these issues which we heard some things in focus groups that we've done, other research that we've done. And two, that we tried to test in the full of our concerns what we call a religious liberty concern and a concern about civil marriage. And at the heart of them, both of these are about concerns about religious marriage and what that might be.

And we found that if we offered people who initially said they would not support the right of gay and lesbian couples to marry, if we offered them an assurance that no church, synagogue or mosque would be forced to perform these marriages, then a significant number of them were willing to say, okay, well, if we have that assurance, we can have an increase of 12 points into those who say they would agree to allow gay and lesbian couples to marry.

And similarly, when we gave people a reassurance about civil marriage, that what the law would provide is only for marriages like you get at city hall – civil marriages like you get at city hall – that we found an even larger increase of support among those who initially said they would not support marriage. They said if the law only relates to civil marriage, we had an increase in 19 points of support. That is, that almost half of the people who initially said they would not support it were willing to then say okay, if that's the case and that's what we're talking about.

What this really points to, I think, is some confusion among the general public about what the law actually relates to. Of course, the first provision is protected by the First Amendment and the second provision is exactly what the law is about. So we call these, kind of, reassurances. But nonetheless, I think it also communicates concerns – deep concerns and worries – among the general public about the issue.

We also found significant – so I've been talking mostly about support for marriage – for legalizing same-sex marriage in California. But we also found significant support among a range of policy issues among Californians. So for example, among laws that would protect gay and lesbian people against job discrimination, three-quarters of Californians say they support those laws. Allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military, seven in 10 Californians favored that. Allowing gays and lesbian couples to adopt children, a majority, 56 percent, support that. And then another question had to do with whether gay and lesbian people should be eligible for ordination as clergy. Californians are basically split on this question.

But there's a broad pattern of support across array of issues, and with marriage being the most divisive one among this array of issues. But interestingly, there are a group – there are a majority, for example, even of white evangelical Protestants and Latino Protestants that are strongly opposed to marriage, but nonetheless support things like workplace nondiscrimination. So that's been kind of a caveat as part of the debate to amend it.

Finally, we found a very interesting portrait of Latino Californians on the issue of allowing gay and lesbian people to marry. And it persists across that same range of other issues: workplace nondiscrimination, military service and adoption as well. That we found, for example, on the issue of marriage that a majority of Latino Catholics – 57 percent – in fact, they were as strong as white mainline Protestants on this point – voted to allow same-sex marriage legal compared to just 22 percent of Latino Protestants.

So a huge divide on the issue of marriage that persists right on down the line to workplace discrimination, allowing gay and lesbian people to serve openly in the military and adoption. You do see closer correlations between Latino Catholics and Protestants on individual rights, right; in workplace nondiscrimination, military service. Where you begin to see the bigger breaks is some things having to do with family, such as adoption and marriage, we begin to see these bigger breaks.

But this divide between Latino Catholics and Latino Protestants in California is a really important divide for really understanding the religious landscape in California on gay and lesbian issues. And with that, let me turn it over to my colleague, David Cox, who is going to tell a little bit more about what we heard about churches in California and clergy and their relationship to the debate around Proposition 8 and the right of gay and lesbian couples to marry.

DAVID COX: Thanks, Robby. So in addition to looking among political groups and religious affiliation groups, we also wanted to look at the role that theology and clergy play in structuring attitudes about same-sex marriage and gay and lesbian issues. One of the issues that we looked at is biblical literalism, so we looked at the difference between people who said the Bible is the literal word of God and folks who say that the Bible was written by men. So we look at the differences between these two groups across four different issues that that Robby had mentioned earlier – workplace discrimination protections, allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military, allowing gays and lesbians to adopt children and allowing gays and lesbians to marry.

What we see here is there is going to be a difference between these two groups, which may not surprise a lot of people. What's really interesting is the gap is significantly different and larger on issues that relate to family. So we see, like, a 50-point gap on the last two issues, which is adoption and same-sex marriage, and we see a smaller but still really significant gap on policy issues, which is workplace protection and military service

We're also really interested in the role that clergy are playing in this debate. And so we asked the respondents of our survey whether clergy – among those who attended services at least once or twice a month, whether their clergy would be talking about this issue. And what we

found was at least half, or about half, reported that they were. And we see significant differences by religious groups.

So on the one hand, we have two-thirds of Latino Protestants reporting that their clergy are speaking on this issue. We have less than three in 10 white Catholics reporting that their clergy are talking about this issue. And overall, what we really see here is a general Protestant/Catholic divide. So white Protestants versus white Catholics, we have a 20-point difference with white Protestants more likely to report hearing their clergy speak out on this issue, and we see the same-sized gap among Latino Protestants and Catholics as well.

We were also interested not just in whether folks are hearing their clergy talk about the issue of homosexuality; we were also interested in the content of those messages. So we asked folks whether their clergy were saying that homosexuality is something to be discouraged, something that should be accepted or whether their clergy didn't really take a position on the issue.

And what we see overall, the general pattern is overwhelmingly negative. Folks that are hearing about the issue in church, they're hearing overwhelmingly negative messages. But again, there are some significant differences across tradition. So for instance, we half about half black Protestants and white evangelicals hearing these messages. (Inaudible) – Protestants hearing negative messages – (inaudible). We see that if you're white, mainline Protestant, you're actually more likely to hear positive messages than negative messages. And this is the only religious group in which this is true.

The other thing I want to point is among white Catholics, this was the group that was least likely to hear clergy speak about homosexuality. But it's overwhelmingly negative. In fact, white Catholics are six times more likely to hear negative messages.

And finally, we wanted to look at the effect of hearing about homosexuality in church has on views on same-sex marriage and gay and lesbian issues generally. And what we see here is it looks like there's a significant correlation between what people are hearing from their clergy and their views on same-sex marriage. So among those that are hearing positive messages that homosexuality should be accepted, six in 10 for same-sex marriage and another one in five support civil unions.

Looking at the other side, those who are hearing negative messages that homosexuality should be discouraged, less than one in five support same-sex marriage. So you're three times less likely to support same-sex marriage if you're hearing negative messages. And nearly half, 46 percent, are saying there should be no legal recognition for gay and lesbians.

The last thing I'm going to talk about – the next question is about, like, who are trusted voices on the issue of homosexuality? How much did our respondent trust these particular groups? And we had – (inaudible) – information. So the six groups that we have are doctors and therapists; parents of gay and lesbian children; gay and lesbian couples; their own clergy leader; teachers; and clergy from a different denomination.

And what we found is that doctors and therapists and parents of gay and lesbian children were most trusted sources of information with about a third saying that they trusted these folks a lot. And between 74 and 80 percent saying they trusted it a lot or a little.

And there, you're starting to see, clergy from a different denomination, only one in 10 said these folks are very – they trust these folks a lot as sources of information about homosexuality. And you see, as far as their own clergy leader goes, well, three in 10 say they trust them a lot but nearly the same number say they don't trust them at all.

And not surprisingly, there are some differences by religious affiliation. And so while only three in 10 say they trust their clergy leader a lot as sources of information about homosexuality among white evangelicals, twice that number – 62 percent – said they trust their clergy a lot. Among Latino Protestants and black Protestants, we have about four in 10. And then white Catholics, white mainline Protestants and Latino Protestants and Latino Catholics are significantly less likely to trust their clergy leaders. I should also note that across all these different religious groups, clergy leaders from different denominations were the lowest on trustworthy on this issue.

With that, I'll wrap it up – (claps hands) – and we'll invite Rev. Shockley to the front.

REVEREND MADISON SHOCKLEY: I'm glad to be here today. I'm glad that Public Religion Research Institute has done such an excellent and detailed poll of Californian attitudes as it relates to same-gender-loving people and their marriage and relationships, their right in society and their opportunities to live free lives.

The main learning that I take away from this poll is that information helps. That more accurate information that people have, the more likely they are to support same-gender-loving marriages and relationships, rights and opportunities.

Just to point out something that Robert's already highlighted, when people are assured that their church, if they happen not to support same-gender-loving marriages, but if their church would not be required to host – or, their clergy would not be required to perform such marriages, then they would be more willing to support it. Or, if marriages offered to same-gender-loving couples were only civil marriages like you get at city hall, they're even more likely to support such marriages.

The fact is, that's always been true. It's always been true. It's true in Massachusetts, it's true wherever it's allowed and it would be true in California as well. It speaks to our fundamental religious freedom, which is truly what this nation was founded on: religious freedom.

But religious freedom goes both ways. So while it's true that the churches that oppose marriages and weddings for same-gender-loving couples would not be forced to do so in terms of recognizing them within their faith, churches like mine, the United Church of Christ – Pilgrim United Church of Christ, particularly – we are prohibited under current law from extending our ministry of marriage to our gay and lesbian members. And so that constrains my religious

freedom and the religious freedom of our congregation. And so we're hopeful that as attitudes continue to become more and more informed with facts, that attitudes will continue to trend towards support for same-gender-loving couples and their marriages, relationships and opportunities.

It's important that we continue the struggle. It's important that we continue to recognize that the marriages, the 10,000-plus – was it 13, 14,000 marriages that – ?

MS. : (Off mike.)

REV. SHOCKLEY: Eighteen-thousand marriages that were legal for that summer of love continue to this day. The sky has not fallen. And California has not slide into the ocean. And so as we continue to bring good, clear information, I think we'll make that advance.

The other kind of myth that was out there that Robert addressed was it was proposed that people who go to church – and certainly, if you go to church very often – would tend to oppose same-gender-loving marriages. Well, as it's made clear in the poll, it depends on which church one attends and which church one belongs to.

Again, information is helpful. If the church is one that sees the Bible as the literal word of God, then they're more likely to oppose. If the church is one that has a post-Enlightenment perspective, then people are much more open-minded and willing to support it. So I think it's good to know that information helps and that we continue to provide clear and accurate information so that we make more and more progress. Thank you.

DIANE WINSTON: I'd like to thank the Public Research – Public Religion – Public Religion Research initiative – Institute. I'm going to start again. (Laughter.)

I would like to thank the Public Religion Research Institute for providing this fine-grained study of attitudes because like Madison, I agree that the more information we have, the better stories we can write from a journalist point of view. And I'd also like to thank you for providing me, despite flubbing your name, with the opportunity to comment on this research.

From my perspective as one who looks at religion in media, the headline for this story is that there is widespread acceptance of gay identity and gay issues among California's religious community. I say that it's important because the narrative that was spread after the passage of Proposition 8 was that religion discriminates against gays and lesbians. And that is a good headline and it gets a lot of attention but it's far from accurate. And there should be no doubt in our minds after seeing this research that it's also not true.

Now, specifically, what we know now is that there are religious leaders mostly among the LDS, the Mormon church, Catholics and white evangelicals who, through foot-soldiers and funding at the passage of Proposition 8. However, this does not reflect what was going on, on the ground in that people in the pews' attitudes and actions did not always follow the leader. In fact, the story is a lot more complex and interesting.

MR. JONES: Diane, could you just put the microphone a little bit closer? Thank you.

MS. WINSTON: Is that better? Okay. So most Californians, including the religious ones who did oppose gay marriage, do support social acceptance and tolerance of the GLBT community. They're opposed to job discrimination, they support military service and they support adoption. So even though people may not agree personally with GLBT issues and identity, they are willing to support and see full social participation and acceptance.

Further, and even more telling, is that most Californians despite their own religious views do support civil unions if not gay marriages. If you look at the statistics, you'll find that especially once you provide the reassurances that churches would not have to perform gay and lesbian marriages if they didn't want to, many people come out on the side of wanting to give civil – at least civil recognition to same-sex couples.

Now, what this says to me is that even though we think of Americans as very religious people, and many people do report strong religious convictions especially around issues of morality, they also draw the line between their personal convictions and what they see best for civil society. And Americans tend to be pragmatic, they tend to be tolerant and they tend to be flexible. And I think this is why you see a strong difference between religious communities that despite their personal opposition to same-sex marriage are willing to support other issues in a public realm where gays and lesbians are treated equally.

The other thing that I find interesting about the study is that age tends to be a great predictor of attitudes and of course that's good news for people who want to see change. And that even more than religion, gender and ethnicity, the younger the person is, the more open-minded on this issue they tend to be.

And in the last five years, attitudes among all religious groups seem to be improving. And last but not least, despite the scare tactics around Proposition 8, you know, what would happen to children if gay marriage became legal and, you know, gays openly teach in class, there is not a lot of fear among religious folks that children may be coerced to try experimentation or might be otherwise harmed.

Now, if I were out to write stories coming out of these new findings, what I would want to do is the following: I'd like to find out more about the Catholic rank and file. White Catholics in particular were supportive of gay and lesbian relationships according to this poll, despite what clergymen were saying. I'd like to know why this is happening now and whether there are social and political trends that these might speak to.

I'd also like to know more about what's going on among Latino evangelicals. Recent polls say that about 30 percent of the Latino community is evangelicals; about 70 percent remains Catholic. The 30 percent evangelical, in most issues, skews with the larger Latino Catholic community in terms of political and social issues. However, it looks like these issues of personal morality is a wedge issue. And I'd like to know more about that. I'd like to know more about why that is and I'd like to know what possibilities there are for – well, as an activist, not a journalist, I'd like to know what probably there is for change there.

I'm interested in the black Protestant community. It's one thing I seem to read from the statistics where it's people saying, this isn't our problem. And I'd like to know if that attitude is changing and why it is or isn't.

Finally, I'd like to know about evangelical youth. We know that young people are skewing more positive on this but we also know that white evangelicals are among the community that's most opposed to it. What's happening with evangelical young people? Are they being polled religiously or is that age demographic stronger? And I think that remains an interesting avenue to pursue.

So the great news about the study is we have more fine-grade information, we can clear up a lot of misconceptions and there are a lot of ways to look more carefully and religion in politics to truly understand how people on the ground are feeling rather than what their leaders are doing, which isn't always reflective of what's happening in the world of religion.

MR. JONES: Great. Well, thank you to Dan Cox from Public Religion Research, Madison Shockley from Pilgrim United Church of Christ and also to Diane Winston from the University of Southern California.

So this is Robert Jones and now we'll open up the floor to take some questions. We have both people on the phone and here in the room. We're going to take first questions from people here in the room. So with that, let me just open it up to people who are here in the room.

We'll let media ask questions first and then we'll go to media on the phone and then we'll open it up to anyone else. So first, if there are reporters here in the room who want to ask a question of anyone on the panel, please feel free.

Q: (Off mike.)

MR. JONES: If you could identify yourself, too, so we'll know who –

Q: (Inaudible.) (Inaudible) – of seeing an interesting religious breakdown, do we know what is going on between Catholics and Protestants? And when you say mainline Protestant, they tend to be non-evangelical?

MR. JONES: Yeah, that's right. Those are the Episcopalians, Presbyterians – PC-USA Presbyterians, Lutherans and ELCA Lutherans. There are Presbyterians and Lutherans on both sides of that divide.

Q: So what's going on in Catholic churches versus black Protestant and Latino Protestants – (inaudible). (Inaudible) – black evangelical Protestants.

MR. JONES: They do share – yeah, that's right. So African-American Protestants, certainly, and Latino Protestants do share a kind of evangelical, theological tradition. Yeah, that's correct.

MS. WINSTON: Well, actually, to be more precise about it, most Latino Protestant evangelicals tend to be Pentecostal or charismatic. And that sort of distinguishes them from many – what you’re calling the African-American church, which could be mainline, which could be evangelical, and might be charismatic, but in a sense, there might be more heterogeneity among the black church than among Latino evangelicals. Does that make sense to you?

Q: Yep. So –

MR. JONES: So the larger question, back to – was, do you want to talk about, just specifically on the issue of legal –

Q: (Inaudible) – evangelical Protestants – (inaudible) – more clearly than African-American Protestants.

MR. JONES: (Chuckles.) All right. Yeah, well, essentially, as you look at the report, you do see a kind of alignment of religious groups. And if you take most of these issues, they line up pretty similarly in the same order, you know, on the issue of gay and lesbian rights. You see this pattern.

And the pattern that you see is, on the one hand, Latino Catholics, white mainline Protestants and white Catholics sort of more on the supportive side of things. You see African-American Protestants and, sort of, sometimes more mixed, but on the more, sort of, opposing side. And then white evangelicals and Latino Protestants pretty far out, solidly opposing gay and lesbian rights. You see those kinds of clusters of things going on.

And certainly, with the white evangelical Protestants and Latino Protestants, part of what’s going on there, certainly, is a kind of shared belief, like on the measure, for example, of biblical literalism; that you see very high levels of biblical literalism among white evangelical Protestants and Latino Protestants. And those views tend to correlate very highly, as Rev. Shockley mentioned, with views on same-sex marriage. That’s one thing in the kind of theological culture that they share.

And if you go to the other end of that spectrum, among Latino Catholics, among white mainliners, for example, you see very low levels – a more literal view of the Bible – that I think makes a real difference in how one approaches a religious text and then applies it to life, makes a difference on these issues.

Q: (Inaudible) – lines that there are passages within the Bible that literally say, sex between – well, as interpreted by some – (inaudible) – that this is what we’re talking about.

MR. JONES: Right, so in our poll, we asked people to kind of self-identify how they approached their reading of the Bible – whether they thought the Bible was the word of God and it should be interpreted literally word for word. That’s the poll question wording. Or whether the Bible, on the other hand, was a book written by human beings and it can be a guide to life, but not something to be taken literally word for word. And so that’s the distinction in how

people approach those texts and apply them to modern – you know, that are very ancient texts and how they apply them to modern life. Any other questions?

Q: What were the major surprises with the outcomes?

MR. JONES: Sure. Why don't – I'll let Dan take that one: surprises.

MR. COX: And it's funny because there are always a few things that are going to surprise you. And I think one of the things that was already alluded to was this divide among Latinos between Protestants and Catholics just on completely opposite sides on these issues is something that's been looked at a little bit but not – we were seeing gaps of, you know, 40 points between these groups. And it was much larger, I think, than we would have expected.

Q: (Inaudible) – views of the clergy, and were you able to tell with certainty whether or not clergy was the main factor in the way that people's attitudes evolved or were there other outside influences?

MR. JONES: Yeah, we don't have anything on the – the question is whether we could distinguish between, kind of, clergy's influence over and against other kinds of outside influences. The closest question we had to that in the poll is that question we asked about trusted sources of information and opinion about homosexuality, there.

And as Dan showed, what our findings there tend to show is that clergy were somewhere in the middle of the pack in terms of overall, with about a third saying that they trusted clergy a lot, with slightly higher numbers saying they trusted, for example, the parents of gay and lesbian children to be trusted sources of information, or doctors and therapists to be trusted sources of information.

But as we've said, and the nice thing about a poll like this is you can look underneath that. And when we look at the different religious groups, there are stark differences in the authority that clergy has in different religious groups. And it was among white evangelical Protestants, Latino Protestants and African-American Protestants where clergy were more strongly seen to be more trusted sources of information about the issue of homosexuality. And among white and Latino Catholics, white mainline Protestants, that was less true. But that's important to understand: Clergy, overall, don't have a kind of net influence for everyone, everywhere, right? It depends on the context. It depends on the religious affiliation.

And then the other finding that Dan alluded to was that people tended to trust clergy closest to them, right? So clergy who were from a denomination different from their own were seen to be some of the least trusted sources. So it's not anyone wearing a collar; it's people who they know and have a relationship with that tend to matter more.

So why don't we go to the phones and see if there's someone – is there a question coming from anyone on the phone lines? And if you could identify yourself; let us know who you are, what outlet you're with and then the question.

OPERATOR: And at this time, if you would like to ask a question, please press the * and 1 on your touchtone phone. Keep in mind, you may withdraw your question at any time by pressing the # key. Once again, to ask a question, please press the * and 1 on your touchtone phone. And we'll pause for a moment to let questions queue.

MR. JONES: Just to remind everybody, you can also address questions to Rev. Shockley or Professor Winston as well, who are here on the panel.

Q: So while we're waiting –

MR. JONES: Yeah, sure.

Q: In terms of the makeup of Latino Catholics on the issue versus the Latino – (inaudible) – and again, I think they're primarily evangelical Protestant congregations –

MR. JONES: Yeah.

Q: Are they – the evangelical Protestant Latinos – tending to be immigrants and Spanish-speaking?

MR. JONES: Actually, it's the opposite of that.

Q: If you could just go ahead and talk into the mike.

MR. JONES: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Well, I'll let Dan go ahead and answer this one too because he's done a little more work on it.

MR. COX: Yeah, no. So Latino Catholics tend to be – both groups are fairly young and have lower levels of educational attainment than the broader general public. But Latino Catholics tend to be more recent immigrants – first-generation immigrants, while Latino Protestants tend more likely to be, like, second- or third-generation immigrants.

Q: Are we drawing conclusions from that or do you have any thoughts about that?

MR. JONES: I mean, one conclusion I would draw is that, you know, believe it or not, this is an area where I think theology matters. That I think the theological and cultural contexts are very different in the Latino Protestants, which, as you said, are very evangelical, versus the Latino Catholic world, which comes out of, you know – that has the world of Catholic social teaching, that has a kind of inheritance of liberation theology out of the Latino Catholic context. And as I said, has a very different approach and orientation to the Bible than Latino Protestants tend to have. So I think that's one of the really key factors here, is the kind of theological and cultural environment, that it's very different in those two contexts.

Q: And of course, the numbers of Latino Catholics are far greater than Latino –

MR. JONES: Yeah.

Q: Do you have the numbers?

MR. JONES: Yeah, well, Diane actually had the numbers just a minute ago.

MS. WINSTON: By and large, it's thought that 70 percent of American Latinos are Catholic and 30 percent are evangelical. We'd have to check to find if those numbers hold true in California as well.

MR. COX: Yeah, just for reference, in our poll, we found out about 58 percent of Latinos were Catholic, about 28 were Protestant and then the others were either a mix or unaffiliated.

MR. JONES: So it's 2-to-1, for sure, Catholic-to-Protestant. Do we have anyone on the phone with a question?

OPERATOR: We'll take our first question from Candace Chellew with Religion Dispatches. Please go ahead.

Q: Hi. My question is, I've noticed in the numbers that there is actually growing support in some of the black Protestant areas despite the negative preaching that they seem to be hearing. What's the trend there? Where is African-American support growing?

MR. JONES: Yeah. Well, one place to look is in our – where we actually asked respondents to think back about how their own views have shifted, and actually to rate them. And among African-Americans who said their views have shifted, twice as many report that they have shifted in a more positive direction over the last five years.

So there is sort of very clear self-reporting among African-Americans saying – and this is actually true among all religious groups, by the way. It really is across the board. More, by far, the ratio is about 2-to-1 across any religious group you want to look at. And among white and Latino Catholics, it's 3-to-1 saying that their views have shifted in a more supportive direction of gay and lesbian rights over the last five years.

So there are just some key shifts. It's not all among the younger crowd, either. It's a little more across the board. But certainly, then, the other part of the story is, I think, younger religious Americans are more supportive of rights for gay and lesbians on these – on marriage and other related issues.

Q: Well, and they're doing this despite reporting that they're hearing a lot of negative preaching.

MR. JONES: Yeah, that's right. And I don't know if Rev. Shockley may want to respond as well.

REV. SHOCKLEY: I can only speak anecdotally –

MR. JONES: Let me give you the mike just to make sure that – (inaudible).

REV. SHOCKLEY: I can only speak anecdotally that within the black church, it's traditionally not been part of this culture war. And so you have – I think, while where it's heard, it might be negative, I think the tradition goes away from participation in the culture war and goes more toward a sideline position.

And Professor Winston alluded to some other findings that indicated a higher rate of respondents from the black community saying this was something that had nothing to do with us. And so that can make one predisposed to say, if you all want to go ahead, go ahead. But that would just be my anecdotal analysis.

Q: And just a question about the message: Latino Protestants equal evangelicals, here? I mean, have you sort of mixed the two? Can you use that interchangeably?

MR. JONES: Yeah, so we actually asked the question – an evangelical self-identification question. So basically, would you describe yourself as a born-again or evangelical Christian? And the vast majority of Latino Protestants identify this way but not all of them. But pretty much, as our panelists alluded to, there – you know, the vast majority of Latino Protestants are evangelical and so they're often characterized as evangelical Protestants – like, Latino evangelical Protestants and not just called Protestants.

MS. WINSTON: But according to other studies, the vast majority of Latino evangelicals are actually Pentecostals and charismatics, which makes a difference, insofar as, oftentimes, those groups tend to extremely – more conservative than, maybe, some of your bread-and-butter evangelicals. So making that distinction, I think, is helpful, as well, that they are evangelicals, but within the evangelical community, many are Pentecostal charismatics.

Q: And just one more follow-up, just so I'm clear. The panel believes that maybe the biggest difference between the Protestant and Catholic Latinos has to do with theological beliefs about the Bible and probably God images. And cultural, where family gets split between personal rights, and then when you're starting to move into family rights?

MR. JONES: Right, well, I've alluded to the numbers on biblical literalism, which I think are really important here, and can get you those after the conference. If you want the exact numbers, I'm happy to look those up for you. But clearly, that's one of the key divides here, is a very different religiosity and a very different approach to sacred texts, a very different approach, and a different theological tradition, really, that these two groups are inheriting.

Q: Okay.

MR. JONES: Yeah.

Q: Thank you.

MR. JONES: Yep. So let me go to see if there's another question on the phone.

OPERATOR: Yes and we'll take our next question from Benjamin Soloway with USA TODAY. Please go ahead.

Q: Hello. Benjamin Soloway, USA TODAY. I was wondering some of the shifts the poll describes are five-year shifts, but Prop 8 was two years ago, so I'm wondering if you think there have been any shifts since Prop 8.

MR. JONES: Well, the top-line numbers suggest, right, that there have been some shifts since two years ago, since we have 51 percent of Californians, a majority, reporting that they would vote to allow gay and lesbian couples to get married. So I think that's a sort of top-line shift that indicates there has been a kind of across-the-board shift.

And the other numbers we were pointing to, I think, is the fact that people across the board, Californians across the board, across the religious landscape, are themselves aware that they have made this shift in their own minds over a fairly short period of time.

MR. COX: The other thing that we should also mention – this was alluded to by several other panelists – is that over the last two years, you've had the most supportive group, 16- and 17-year-olds becoming 18- and 19-year-olds moving into the voting population and these are the folks that are most supportive of same-sex marriage. And you have the most opposed folks, you know, with voting rights that are going to be falling off. So that trend, you know, we can't speak to it directly because we didn't ask the question in the last two years, but we can speak to it more generally because that pattern is definitely occurring.

Q: We need to note too, I mean, this does not apply to voters.

MR. JONES: Right. Right, right. This is all Californians. Yes.

Q: This does not necessarily mean anything in terms of the vote.

MR. JONES: Right. Well, we actually have – we have a question about registered voters in the poll. And we're happy to give you registered voter numbers if you want to run any registered voter numbers because we actually have a question about whether – so we can limit the sample to registered voters. When we did, we still have 51 percent of registered voters in California saying that they would vote to allow same-sex couples to marry in the country.

Q: The other – am I still on the line?

MR. JONES: Yep, yep.

Q: The other thing I was wondering is some of these questions have a progression that's carefully structured to figure out what sympathy there can be in any circumstance. And do you think that maybe when it comes down to it outside of a poll, people won't be able to progress through the logic of it that way and it won't be the same level of support?

MR. JONES: Sure. Well, I should make a couple of comments here. First of all, we do have the full questionnaire out on the website and it's freely available. It has all the questions, all the question wordings. We've been very transparent about how the questions were worded.

We actually took great care to try to arrange the survey – it's always difficult – but to arrange the survey so that the questions would not be leading, and tried to ask them as fairly as possible, and it would not sort of overdetermine answers.

As you may know, though, we have – our numbers reflect – were right on the nose with a number of other surveys, including the California field poll that just came out this week that also showed 51 percent of Californians saying that they would vote to allow same-sex couples to marry. And they had a slightly different question wording than we did and still came out with really the same results that we did as well.

I mean, there are always question-wording effects and the best way as a pollster is you mitigate them. But you know, we've taken great care on the poll here. And the findings, I think, check out with other benchmarks that we would look to externally.

MS. WINSTON: Moreover, polls sometimes take up nuances which fly in the face of journalistic convention. And I'm thinking about a Pew poll a few years ago that found that even among evangelicals who believed that their mission was to reach out to nonbelievers and preach God's word, there was a real reluctance to do so because of their belief in religious tolerance and in the fact that people were allowed to have their own religious beliefs. Now, that really leaves you with this conundrum. Well, so they're evangelical; they want to spread the word. But they also realize that in American civil society, people's religious differences should be respected.

So I think that it's not only this survey that defines a high degree of nuance among respondents. That people can feel very strongly that this is wrong yet want to find ways to accept other people's differences. And it's a hard thing, sometimes, to accept because it doesn't seem to be straightforward. But I think it reflects the strong tradition we have of pluralism and tolerance.

MR. JONES: Great. All right, do we have another question from the phone?

OPERATOR: As a reminder, if you would like to ask a question, please press the * and 1 on your touchtone phone. (Pause.) And it appears that we have no further questions at this time.

MR. JONES: Okay. Great. Well, let me just check in with the folks here in the room. Are there any further questions from people here in the room?

Q: I just have one to add.

MR. JONES: Sure.

Q: So do you have advice for the folks who are pushing legalization of gay marriage? From this survey, what would you tell them? Would you tell them to focus on certain groups? Would you tell them to focus on certain – (inaudible)?

MR. JONES: Yeah. Well, you know, that's not the business we're in today. But what we're really trying to do is provide the best picture that we can of where Californians are. And what I think will happen is that – and you know, what I hope to happen will – is that everyone interested in this question will actually look at the survey, see the results for what they are and really have a better understanding.

It's going to echo something Reverend Shockley said, that I think one of the best things that can happen if we're going to have an honest debate about an issue that people have honest disagreements about, that the best thing we can do is be armed with the best information that we can, so that we're actually talking about real issues and not sort of talking about things that seem – that are maybe a smokescreen or not this or not that.

But really, that we can have the best information we can, we can see where the lay of the land is and maybe have a better understanding of why people are where they are. I mean, that's one thing that I hope this survey will do is make a real contribution to understanding where people's concerns are, where people's worries are and, you know, perhaps there may be more common ground here than people thought.

REV. SHOCKLEY: Well, I am in that business. (Laughter.) So I would say that reassuring voters that allowing same-gender-loving couples to marry would not force them in their church or their clergy to participate, even though it's already true.

The distinction between so-called religious marriage and civil marriage is a distinction without a difference in our culture. Whether you get married – whether you have your wedding at the church or at the beach, it all starts at the county clerk's office. And once the county clerk issues you a marriage license, you can take it wherever you want to take it.

But when you knock on the church door – and Catholics know this better than any, I think, and this, I think, is reflected in the poll. A Protestant can't walk up to a Catholic church and demand to get married, not today or tomorrow. And even Catholics – (chuckles) – can't demand to get married in a Catholic church unless they meet certain criteria. So I think they're very clear that there's no chance or no reason to fear that allowing same-gender-loving couples to marry would compromise their religious practice or their religious freedom.

And so I think we could hopefully enlist our Catholic brothers and sisters in making that point, even while we disagree on whether those marriages should be held or not. And so I think that's the message that I take away from this poll.

MS. WINSTON: Putting on my academic hat, the message I take away from it is that supporters – opponents of Proposition 8 can sit tight because time is on their side. And each year, as more young people become eligible to vote, if the demographics hold, they will be supporters of marriage equality. So it would be great to keep educating people and to keep

changing people's minds, but it looks to be a certain, hopefully, inevitability that change will come.

Q: Can I ask just one quick follow-up?

MR. JONES: Okay, sure.

Q: On this God-image thing.

MR. JONES: Yeah.

Q: What does the poll say about one's image of God and how that works – (inaudible)?

MR. JONES: Yeah, no, thanks for asking that. It's one of the things that I think we don't often get asked about even though we're very interested in it. One of the things that I'm proud to say we did is we've tried to dig under – you know, we talked about some theology; we talked about belief in the Bible. We also in this poll asked a number of questions about people's images of God and have an interest in sort of how that affects their views on social issues.

And one of the things that we found, interestingly enough, was that there is a divide between people who say they have a belief in God, who say that God is a person with whom one can have a relationship – so that's one category – and other people who believe in God but believe that God is more of an impersonal force in the universe.

And one of the things that our poll showed, interestingly enough, is that people who were sort of more certain about a kind of personal image of God, someone with whom one could have a relationship, were less likely to support the rights of gay and lesbians to marry than were people who had a view of God that was more impersonal and about – a kind of force in the universe, a more abstract force in the universe than a personal view of God.

Q: What are we going to take from that?

MR. JONES: Yeah, it's interesting. I mean, I think at least one of the things to think about is that a view of God that is more impersonal and a kind of force of the universe has more mystery around it – I think is one of the things going on. And it has less certainty and a little more mystery around it. And views that are about God as a person with whom one can have a relationship is much more concrete and I think a little less mysterious. It's a very concrete image of who God is.

And so I think that's at least one of the things going on behind there, that there's maybe a little less – and the theologian over here may want to jump in and correct me here. But I think it's at least one of the things going on.

REV. SHOCKLEY: No, I think that's right on. I wouldn't correct you. I would just add that it also implies a view about human freedom. That if you think that God is a personal – idea

that one can have a relationship with, you ask the question, what did God say about this? And then that determines how you feel or impacts how you feel about it.

But if God is this force in the universe, people tend to understand that force as one for good, love, a positive force. And that it's then incumbent on the human that has a belief in this kind of God to interpret what is good, to interpret what is love, to interpret what is positive. And so that leaves a lot more area for human freedom to determine in a particular moment in time and context in history, what does God desire of us? And so many answer, to do justice, to live right, to walk humbly with your God.

So I think the area of human freedom was broader for those who have a view of God as a force, whereas it's much narrower when that God speaks and those words that God has spoken can be found in this book called the Bible.

Q: And that is probably the way that those images line up with the various traditions – (inaudible) – lined up on each side of the issue.

MR. JONES: They do. Yeah. Yeah, that's right. Well, thank you all for coming. Thank you to everyone on the phone. The full results of the poll, including the polling report, the press release and the top-line questionnaire are available on Public Religion Research Institute's website. That's www.publicreligion.org/research, so you can go there. So it's www.publicreligion.org/research. Thanks, everyone, for coming.

(END)