

THE REPUBLICAN BASE REJECTS PROP 8 FAMILY VISION, BUT NOT PROP 8

Fresh off the Prop 8 trial, I was interested in what Markos' latest poll—of 2003 Republicans—says about equal rights for gay men and women in this country.

First, the poll shows that Republicans think gays should be allowed or not allowed to do the following things:

Serve in military: Yes, 23%; No, 55%

Receive federal benefits for couples:
Yes, 11%; No, 68%

Teach in public schools: Yes, 8%; No,
73%

Marry: Yes, 7%; No, 77%

That is, one in six of those polled are perfectly happy to let gay men and women risk sacrificing their lives for our mutual defense. But they don't think those servicemen and women should be accorded one of the most basic rights in our society.

As the rest of the poll shows, these people are bigots in a bunch of other ways, as well, so the gay rights questions shouldn't be that surprising.

But what I find particularly interesting is how that compares to the results that get to—at least partly—heterosexual marriage. As you recall, the central argument of the Prop 8 defendant-intervenors is that marriage is primarily about procreation.

[Defendant-Intervenor lawyer Charles Cooper]: And the purpose of the institution of marriage, the central purpose, is to promote procreation and

to channel narrowly procreative sexual activity between men and women into stable enduring unions for the purpose –

THE COURT: Is that the only purpose of marriage?

MR. COOPER: Your Honor, it is the central and, we would submit, defining purpose of marriage. It is the – it is the basis on which and the reason on which marriage as an institution has been universal across societies and cultures throughout history; two, because it is a pro-child societal institution.

In later questioning, Prop 8 lawyer David Thompson asserted some of the following gender-based reasons that marriage had to be heterosexual:

- “If you look at the Homer Simpsons of the world [with regards to low intelligence], there are a lot more men than women”
- “wives spend money differently – or, I should say, that women spend money differently than men in terms of as it relates to children”
- “Fathers’ biological and socially-reinforced masculine qualities predispose them to treat their children differently than do mothers, correct?”
- “the differences between maternal and paternal behavior are more strongly

related to either the parents' biological gender or sex roles, than to either of their degree of involvement in infant care or their attitudes regarding the desirability of paternal involvement in infant care"

- "fathers are more concerned than mothers about the adoption of cultural values and traditionally-defined sex roles"

The picture of marriage the Prop 8 proponents rely on (which itself comes from long outdated scholarship as a factual matter) to justify their opposition to marriage equality includes not just on procreation as the necessary and primary goal of marriage. But it also depends on a daddy who instills moral conservatism, a mommy who breast feeds and spends frivolously, and a mommy who helps her children's dumb daddy negotiate life.

Which is interesting because when Research 2000 polled those same bigots about subjects that would suggest an acceptance of this view of marriage, they found pluralities and majorities opposed:

Are marriages equal partnerships, or are men leaders of the household?

Equal: 76%; Men: 13%

Should contraceptives use be outlawed?

Yes: 31%; No: 56%

Do you believe the birth control pill is abortion?

Yes: 34%; No: 48%

Even among a group that has pretty frightening views otherwise, this group strongly believes in an equal marriage—precisely the kind long-outdated studies relied on by proponents advocated—and the availability of contraception.

If a majority of these people support keeping sex without procreation legal, then why won't they support the right to marry for those men and women fighting to serve in the military?