

Same-Sex Marriage: Breeding Ground for Logical Fallacies

One cannot offer any disagreement that same-sex marriage has gained a great deal of publicity in the recent years. While the issue played a large role in previous presidential elections, the debate over whether same-sex marriage should be legalized or banned has rooted itself within our society. Arguments can be made for both sides of the debate, but each must possess logic and evidence, both of which Sam Schulman fails to provide when he argues against the legalization of gay marriage, claiming that by allowing homosexual couples to wed, it will cause a detriment to society and children's well-being.

Immediately, Schulman reveals his position on the issue when he blatantly describes himself as "someone passionately and instinctively opposed to the idea of homosexual marriage" (Schulman 100). From this, Schulman reveals his audience as one that can range from those opposed to same-sex marriage, to those flip-flopping back and forth on their positions regarding the issue, to, finally, those in favor of the union. Essentially, Schulman writes in a way that is intended to appeal to a wide range of people. He writes persuasively in order to solicit those on the fence and those who support of the issue, but also to empower and strengthen the arguments of those who oppose the matter, such as himself.

Schulman uses his title, "Gay Marriage—and Marriage" and topic of his piece to force the readers to accept the premise that same-sex marriage possesses a stronghold in society and causes much debate in the world today. But, he does not want his audience to accept that only religion plays a major role against the debate, he wants them to challenge

“the heart of the matter”; he believes that gay marriage has a detrimental effect on the world and that “what is at stake in this debate is not only the potential unhappiness of children, grave as that is; it is our ability to maintain the most basic components of our humanity” (Schulman 100). He therefore desires his audience to accept the idea that homosexuality challenges the workings of society and humanity; it goes against any ‘natural’ foundation. The final premise that Schulman causes his readers to question presents itself in his discussion at the end of the piece, claiming that “it (marriage) does not exist because of custom” (Schulman 105). He requests his readers to accept that marriage does exist because of tradition, and that traditions established laws which govern society. Although Schulman uses his belief that “we have all learned to practice a certain deference to the pleas of minorities with grievances” (Schulman 101) as a principle all his readers must accept, he also uses it as a motive for the public’s apathy, indifference and acceptance of gay marriage, therefore claiming that if society reluctantly and respectfully gives in to this minority such as in the past, allowing same-sex marriage will cause the destruction of the very foundations of the social order.

While Schulman uses history as a background and an attempt to establish a pattern for the future of the issue in a very persuasive and effective way, his continuing argument against same-sex marriages contains many logical fallacies. One misleading notion Schulman uses takes its form in a *False Analogy*. In a way, he takes his belief that the law should deny a man or woman the ability to marry another of the same sex and reduces it to the most absurd *False Analogy*, claiming that “I cannot be a father to a pebble—I cannot be a brother to a puppy—I cannot make my horse my consul. Just so, I cannot, and should not be able to, marry a man” (Schulman 104). The arguer combines

the *False Analogy* and *Absurdo Ad Reductum* fallacies and essentially equates homosexual marriage to a human fathering an inanimate object, or making an animal the sibling of a human, or giving a horse a high position within the government. His use of this *False Analogy* proves ineffective in his attempt to solicit others to his side of the argument. It gives no further factual evidence why the government should prevent same-sex marriage or why it would be detrimental to society. Reducing a human being to lowlier forms only isolates those who support gay marriage and works to Schulman's detriment by alienating those undecided about the issue. A human is a human, no matter what their sexual orientation, and Schulman ignores that in his attempt to gain support.

Earlier within his article, another logical fallacy in the form of a *Red Herring* shows its face. Instead of focusing on the topic at hand, Schulman veers into the definition of the "essence" of marriage and moves to discreetly switch the topic from homosexual marriage to concubinage: the alternate to 'real' marriage. He tries to convince his audience that marriage "is to sanction and solemnize that connection of opposites which alone creates new life... Men and women *can* marry only because they belong to different, opposite sexes" (Schulman 104). Schulman attempts to clarify his position only to switch the argument in order to throw the reader off from the real topic by saying that his "reference to concubinage suggests, marriage is an institution that is built around female sexuality and female procreativity" (Schulman 104). With this one statement he moves his argument out of the realm of arguing gay marriage towards the argument of a woman's position within a marriage and the sexuality surrounding it. This allows him an escape and acts as a distraction from the main discussion.

Similar to the *Red Herring*, the *Straw Man* fallacy quickly shows itself after the author's move towards the area of sexuality's role in marriage. After discussing the sexual relationship contained within marriage and the surrounding sexuality, he pulls out the *Straw Man* mechanism and changes his argument to the discussion of contraceptives. He claims that "circumstances have admittedly, changed. Thanks to contraception, the decision to marry no longer precedes sexual intercourse as commonly as it did 50 years ago, when, for most people, a fully sexual relationship could begin only with marriage" (Schulman 104). With these two simple sentences, Schulman shifts his argument from gay marriage towards the change of sexual relationships over the years and the role contraceptives have played. Obviously, this possesses no relevance to the debate over whether same-sex marriage should be legalized and whether it causes a detrimental effect to society and children. Schulman merely makes this alteration in order to change topics to a much simpler and more provable argument.

A major fallacy that plagues many arguments against the legalization of gay marriage presents itself in the form of a *Slippery Slope*. The use of *Slippery Slope* logic proves quite unreliable. Schulman tries to convince the reader that if gay marriage becomes a legal right to homosexual citizens, then "queuing up behind them... are the proponents of polygamy, polyandry, and polyamorism, all ready to argue that their threesomes, foursomes, and other 'nontraditional' arrangements are entitled to the same rights as everyone else's" (Schulman 102). According to this logic, simply granting the right to homosexual couples to participate in a marriage will lead the legalization of other frowned upon marriages. Informed readers can see through this argument. Just because rights are granted to one group, does not mean something extreme such as the

legalization of polygamy and others will take place. The establishment of homosexual marriage does not concern quantity. Polygamy, polyandry, and polyamorism argue over the number of people allowed in a marriage. Legalizing and allowing homosexuals marriage rights provides rights set up by the Constitution to every citizen, whereas polygamy and the like simply grant a different number of people allowed in the same committed circumstance.

Schulman furthers his *Slippery Slope* logic when he continues to blame legalization of homosexual marriage as the cause for the possible permission of incest.

If we grant rights to one group because they have demanded it—which is, practically, how legalized gay marriage will come to pass—we will find it exceedingly awkward to deny similar rights to others ready with their own dossiers of ‘victimization.’ In time, restricting marriage rights to couples, whether straight or gay, can be made to seem no less arbitrary than the practice of restricting marriage rights to one man and one woman. Ultimately, the same must go for the incestuous relationships between consenting adults (Schulman 103-104).

Simply because homosexuals achieve legal rights granted to other heterosexual married couples does not mean that the legalization of incestuous relationships and incestuous marriages will gain footing. Legalizing gay marriage will not lead to the destruction of mankind. Mankind is made up of heterosexuals as well as homosexuals. In the past, when the country has come to the conclusion that certain laws are discriminatory (for instance, slavery), they change the laws. Changing the traditions of the country does not mean that it will lead to the legalizations of other extreme issues. Each issue possesses its own debate and argument with no bearing on the other.

Essentially, Schulman’s article proves rather ineffective because of the abundance of logical fallacies. While many of his premises can be readily accepted by the audience, his attempt to persuade others does not work because of the amount of misleading and flawed logic contained within the text. While his goal of empowering others with his

same beliefs might be effective, he still misses with persuasion. A main fallacy that displays his inability to appeal to a good portion of the audience is the use of the *Straw Man* fallacy. He cannot continue to argue the ban of gay marriage and must shift his argument to another more provable debate. Schulman's could strengthen his argument by simply eliminating his discussion of female sexuality in marriage as well as his debate over contraceptives.

The dispute over same-sex marriage requires factual and logical support from both viewpoints; both are characteristics lacking within Sam Schulman's article, "Gay Marriage—and Marriage." While arguments can make cases with the use of logical fallacies, the author or arguer must realize that a closer look and analysis of the debate and his or her position could easily cause the destruction of whatever footing they possessed. Many arguments and debates contain certain limitations and fallacies, but the debate over gay marriage especially provides an avenue for logical fallacies to thrive.

Works Cited

- Schulman, Sam. "Should Same-Sex Marriages be Legally Recognized?" *No: Gay Marriage—and Marriage*. Taking Sides: Social Issues. Issue 6. (2006). 100-105.