

3.0 Main Issues

3.1 LGBTQ+ Rights

1. Introduction

The controversy around LGBTQ+ rights reveals a stark difference between traditional values and Western liberalism. The liberal emphasis on individual autonomy and equality, as demonstrated by the U.S. Supreme Court's Obergefell v. Hodges (2015) decision, is reflected in Western norms such as same-sex marriage, anti-discrimination laws, and the legal acknowledgement of various identities. On the other hand, conventional frameworks like Islamic law and Confucian ethics frequently denounce homosexuality as a danger to societal order, family values, or divine law. Thus, this problem represents a more profound conflict between upholding cultural or religious values and fundamental human rights.

2. Western Liberalism Perspective

Individual liberty, equality, and human rights are the main pillars of Western liberalism's approach to LGBTQ+ rights.

- **Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage**

The liberal tradition in the West contends that marriage is a civil contract as well as a religious institution. The idea of equality before the law is thought to be broken when same-sex couples are denied the opportunity to be married.

Example:

In the landmark **Obergefell v. Hodges (2015)** decision, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide. The Court emphasized that marriage is a *fundamental right* under the U.S. Constitution, protected by the **14th Amendment's Due Process and Equal Protection Clauses**.

- **Anti-Discrimination Laws**

Laws in several Western nations (such as Canada, the Netherlands, and Germany) forbid discrimination on the grounds of gender identity and sexual orientation in the workplace, in schools, and in housing. These represent the liberal view that, independent of the prevailing cultural or religious beliefs, each person's identity must be acknowledged and legally safeguarded.

- **Philosophical Underpinnings**

John Stuart Mill: Advocated for **liberty of the individual** if it does not harm others. For Mill, LGBTQ+ rights fit naturally under the principle of self-determination.

Contemporary Thinkers: Judith Butler's theory of **gender performativity** argues that gender and sexuality are not fixed but socially constructed, supporting the liberal

defense of diverse identities.

3. Traditional Values Perspective

Traditional frameworks, on the other hand, frequently oppose liberal reforms of the Western kind and instead assess LGBTQ+ identities based on cultural continuity, religious morality, and social stability.

- **Islamic Law (Sharia)**

Most people believe that homosexuality is sinful and against divine law (haram).

Same-sex relationships are illegal in many Muslim-majority nations, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Nigeria (northern states under Sharia law), and they can occasionally result in harsh penalties.

Islamic law places a higher priority on upholding social and familial order and submitting to God's will than it does on personal preferences.

- **Confucianism (East Asia)**

Confucian ideals place a strong emphasis on filial piety, family harmony, and lineal continuity.

Due to the disruption of the expectations of marriage, procreation, and the continuation of the family name, homosexuality has frequently been viewed as taboo, but not always because of overt punishment.

Legal sanctions may not exist in nations like China, Japan, and South Korea, but social stigma and familial pressure continue to be significant obstacles to LGBTQ+ acceptance.

- **Philosophical Underpinnings**

Confucius: Stressed the importance of hierarchical roles and responsibilities within the family and society. LGBTQ+ relationships challenge these expectations.

Religious Traditions (Islam, Christianity, Hinduism): Often frame homosexuality as unnatural or morally wrong, appealing to divine authority or sacred texts.

4. The Cultural Clash

Tensions occur when these viewpoints collide:

- **Western Liberal Argument:** The equality and dignity of every person serve as the foundation for LGBTQ+ rights, which are universal human rights.
- **Traditionalist Argument:** LGBTQ+ practices are frequently viewed as a Western imposition that disregards cultural identity and pose a threat to family structures, religious morality, and social stability.

Example:

- In 2019, Taiwan became the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage; however, conservative religious groups opposed the move, claiming it went against traditional family values.
- Uganda's 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, which was justified as a defense of "African values" against alleged Western influence, severely criminalized same-sex relationships.

3.2 Gender Equality and Women's Roles

1. Introduction

One of the significant debates in the conversation between Western liberalism and traditional values concerns **gender equality and the role of women**. Throughout the myriad cultures, women's position in the family, society, and politics has been molded by religious teachings, philosophical traditions, and modern refinement movements. This issue raised an underlying question: should women's rights be framed as universal, individual, or relative to cultural and traditional contexts?

2. Western Liberalism on Women's Equality

Western liberalism, especially since the Enlightenment, has advanced the idea that women deserve the **same rights and opportunities** as men.

- **Liberal Feminism** emphasizes equal access to education, employment, and political participation. Thinkers like **John Stuart Mill**, in *The Subjection of Women* (1869), argues that women should not be confined by tradition but allowed to fully exercise liberty. (Mill, 1869/1989)
- Western societies gradually moved toward legal reforms such as **women's suffrage**, reproductive rights, and workplace equality.
- Philosophically, this is grounded in the **rights-based approach**, where each person, regardless of gender, has inherent dignity and autonomy.

Thus, in the Western liberal framework, equality is non-negotiable. Any denial of women's rights is seen as oppression.

3. Traditional Values and Women's Roles

In most traditional societies, women's roles are framed through the **lens of family and community stability**, not individual freedom.

- **Confucianism**: In Confucian philosophy, **women are traditionally expected to maintain domestic duties and uphold filial piety**, while **men are seen as public leaders**. **The Analects (Book 17.25)** reflects this view, emphasizing **hierarchy within**

the family and society. While this framework ensures order and stability, it often **limits women's roles to the private sphere** (Confucius, trans. 1997, Analects 17.25).

- **Islamic Law (Sharia):** In Islamic tradition, **women's roles are respected but regulated, with strong emphasis on modesty, marriage, and family obligations.** At the same time, the **Qur'an affirms women's rights to inheritance, education, and property.** For example, **Qur'an 33:35 lists men and women equally in devotion:** “*Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women... the charitable men and charitable women... the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so—for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward.*” This highlights the balance between **spiritual equality and distinct social roles** (The Qur'an, 33:35, trans. Ali, 2004).
- **Hinduism:** The **soul (Ātman)** is considered **eternal and beyond gender**, as stated in the **Bhagavad Gita (2:20):** “The soul is **neither born, nor does it die...** It is not slain when the body is slain.” (Bhagavad Gita 2.20, trans. Prabhupada, 1986). This teaching, spoken by the **Supreme Lord Krishna**, implies that **men and women are ultimately equal in essence**, since their **true self is the same divine consciousness.** Krishna further reinforces this in the **Bhagavad Gita (9:32),** where he declares that **devotion, not gender or social status, determines spiritual worth:** “For those who **take refuge in Me, O Partha,** though they be of **lower birth—women, merchants, or laborers—even they attain the supreme goal.**” (Bhagavad Gita 9.32, trans. Prabhupada, 1986). This teaching was revolutionary for its time, affirming that **women had direct access to liberation (moksha) through devotion and dharma, equal to men.**

4. Analysis: Clash and Convergence

Conflict: Western liberalism insists on dismantling traditional gender roles in favor of equality, while traditional systems often argue that **roles, not rights, preserve society's balance.**

Convergence: Hindu philosophy, by affirming that the soul is **beyond gender**, offers a point of reconciliation: spirituality, equality exists, even if socially roles differ. Similarly, Islam acknowledges women's dignity under God, though expressed within prescribed boundaries.

Thus, while traditional values may resist full liberal equality, their **philosophical depth** (e.g., genderless soul in Hinduism, dignity in Islam) creates space for conversation rather than absolute opposition.

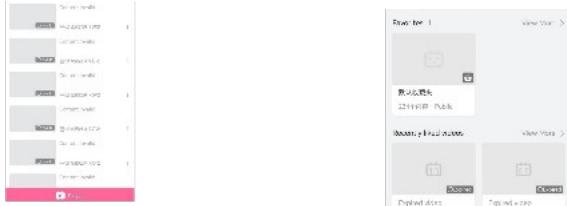
3.3 Tradition vs. Modernity

1. Western Liberalism: The Influence of Modernity on Gender and Sexuality Policies

Modernity in the West has brought significant changes in attitudes towards gender and sexuality, mainly through the influence of secularism and human rights laws. In the past few decades, gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights have become central to

Western ideals, leading to a more inclusive society where individuals can express their identities freely, without fear of persecution or censorship.

A prime example of this progressive shift can be seen in the case of **Renjie and Binbin** (斌斌看起来很好吃), a couple whose videos, where they share their daily lives, were taken down by Bilibili on 22nd July 2025.



The couple's YouTube channel has 1.11 million subscribers, where they have consistently shared their journey and the realities of their relationship. On platforms like YouTube, their content is widely accepted, with many positive comments encouraging them to "be themselves" and ignore the negative feedback. This is indicative of how modern Western values champion individuality, freedom of expression, and the importance of gender and sexual equality.

The creators have invested significant effort in producing 234 videos since 2019. These videos primarily share their daily lives and are not intended to be offensive or controversial. Instead, they offer an honest portrayal of their personal experiences and relationship. There is no inherent issue with their content, which can be viewed as a form of self-expression and a celebration of individuality. The removal of their videos on Bilibili raises questions about the balance between content regulation and freedom of expression, a principle that is central to many modern societies.

In the West, these values are embedded in legal frameworks, such as **human rights laws** that protect freedom of speech and expression. The absence of censorship or societal pushback on topics like same-sex relationships and non-traditional gender roles allows for diverse content, enabling people like Renjie and Binbin to freely express their identities and life experiences. The widespread support they receive from viewers on YouTube highlights a growing global acceptance of gender diversity and LGBTQ+ issues, which aligns with Western liberal thought.



Moreover, **progress** in Western liberalism is not just about acceptance, but also about **advancing equality**. Renjie and Binbin's videos are an example of people pushing societal boundaries, challenging the traditional norms of gender and sexuality. The idea of "progress" is rooted in the belief that societies should evolve to be more inclusive, allowing individuals from marginalized groups—such as the LGBTQ+ community—to thrive without fear of judgment or legal consequences.

2. Traditional Values: The Conflict with Modernity in Non-Western Societies

While Western liberalism emphasizes the importance of individual rights and freedom of expression, **traditional values** often have a more restrictive view of gender roles and sexuality. These values are deeply rooted in cultural, religious, and historical contexts, and they continue to influence many societies, especially in countries like China, India, and several African nations. These traditional norms often center on **heteronormative** ideas about marriage and sexuality, where gender roles are strictly defined, and any deviation is considered taboo or morally wrong.

In China, where **Confucianism** has historically shaped views on family, marriage, and gender roles, the social pressure to conform to traditional norms is immense. Renjie and Binbin's videos, which include depictions of their romantic relationship and daily life as a same-sex couple, directly challenge these deep-seated norms. This challenge is not unique to them; it reflects a broader global issue where modernization and globalization clash with traditional cultural values.

The **censorship** of Renjie and Binbin's content on Bilibili is an example of this conflict. Bilibili, a major Chinese video-sharing platform, removed their videos citing "**public order**", "**social customs**", and "**moral ethics**". According to the platform's guidelines, content creators are encouraged to avoid topics that could "trigger gender-related conflicts" or promote "non-mainstream views on marriage and relationships." This is a clear indication of the power that traditional values still hold in shaping media content, even in the digital age. In this context, the removal of Renjie and Binbin's videos can be seen as an attempt to maintain the status quo, protecting traditional gender roles and societal expectations, which often marginalize non-heteronormative identities.



The negative comments they received on YouTube—such as "God will torture them" "forbidden by law," and "disgusting"—reflect the widespread discomfort and opposition to non-traditional relationships. These comments highlight the resistance some individuals still have toward non-heteronormative relationships, even in platforms that are generally more accepting of diverse content like YouTube. This illustrates the global tension between progressive values, which embrace diversity in gender and sexuality, and traditional beliefs that are deeply rooted in cultural and religious contexts.



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3. The Impact of Globalization on Traditional Values

Globalization has played a significant role in bringing Western liberal ideas to non-Western societies, which has led to a **clash of cultures**. As global communication and travel become more accessible, ideas about gender and sexuality that were once confined to Western countries are now spreading worldwide. While this has led to greater acceptance in some places, it has also resulted in a **backlash** in others, where traditional values are deeply entrenched.

In the case of Renjie and Binbin, their popularity on YouTube, where they receive support from a diverse international audience, contrasts sharply with the rejection they face on Bilibili, where their videos were removed to align with local cultural and political sensibilities. This reflects the tension between **modern ideals** of freedom, inclusivity, and equality, and **traditional beliefs** that seek to preserve societal structures rooted in historical and cultural norms.

4. Conclusion: Finding a Balance Between Tradition and Modernity

The conflict between modernity and tradition is not an isolated issue but a global phenomenon. As societies continue to evolve, especially with the impact of globalization, there is a growing tension between preserving traditional values and embracing modern ideals of freedom and equality. Renjie and Binbin's case serves as a poignant example of how individuals who challenge traditional norms can face censorship, discrimination, and marginalization, even in an age where liberal ideals are gaining prominence.

To conclude, it's essential to recognize that the struggle between **Western Liberalism** and **Traditional Values** is complex and multifaceted. While Western liberalism advocates for individual rights and freedoms, traditional values often prioritize social harmony and conformity to established norms. As globalization continues to shape the world, these opposing forces will likely continue to clash, raising important questions about how societies can balance **progress** with respect for **cultural heritage**.