

Human Values, Legal Regulation, and Approval of Homosexuality in Europe: A Cross-Country Comparison

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Introduction

- The European Union's anti-discrimination law explicitly forbids discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation (Ellis, 2005).
- Western countries, however, differ in granting civil rights to gay and lesbian couples.
- Although public opinion about homosexuality has become more liberal, approval of homosexuality differs remarkably among individuals and across countries (e.g., Gerhards, 2010).
- People's general attitude toward homosexuality may reflect their approval or disapproval of homosexual behavior, of people with a homosexual or bisexual orientation, and/or of communities of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (Herek, 2000).

Added Value

This study goes beyond previous studies of approval of homosexuality in several ways:

- a) We propose and test a wider set of theory-grounded hypotheses that link several individual value priorities to approval of homosexuality;
- b) we examine variation in value-attitude links across 27 countries by analyzing representative national samples;
- c) we investigate country differences in approval of homosexuality as a function of variation on a comprehensive measure of their legal regulation of homosexuality;
- d) we analyze possible moderations of the effects of particular individual value priorities on approval of homosexuality by the legal regulation of homosexuality.
- e) Our data come from the fifth round of the European Social Survey (ESS round 5, 2010), and we use multilevel analysis to take the nested structure of the data into account.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Ascribing priority to conservation values relates negatively to approval of homosexuality.

- People often perceive homosexuality as a threat to the traditional family (Haddock, Zanna, & Esses, 1993; Haddock & Zanna, 1998).
- Accepting homosexuality entails abandoning traditional views of sexual morality and gender roles in favor of changing mores.
- Individuals who prioritize obeying prevailing social norms and expectations (conformity values), preserving traditional practices and customs (tradition), and avoiding disruption of the status quo of social arrangements (security) should disapprove of homosexuality because it threatens the realization of these values.
- The higher order conservation value is close to right-wing authoritarianism both conceptually and empirically (e.g., Altemeyer, 1998; Cohrs, Moschner, Maes, & Kielmann, 2005).
- Numerous studies have linked right-wing authoritarianism to outgroup derogation, feelings of moral superiority, and disapproval of homosexuality (e.g., Altemeyer, 2002; Feather & McKee, 2012; Haddock & Zanna, 1998; van den Akker et al., 2013).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 2: Ascribing priority to openness to change values relates positively to approval of homosexuality.

- Approving of homosexuality entails accepting the legitimacy of counternormative, autonomous behavior that departs from prevailing social arrangements.
- It entails accepting the rights of people to pursue less standard ways of building relationships and finding satisfaction and pleasure in life.
- Attributing importance to openness to change values is likely to facilitate acceptance of such alternative lifestyles that challenge conventional mores.
- Self-direction values emphasize autonomy, exploration, and creativity in thought and behavior.
- Stimulation values emphasize the pursuit of novelty, excitement, and challenge.
- Hedonism values emphasize the free pursuit of pleasure.
- These values apply to the self, but they also legitimize pursuit of these same goals by others.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 3: Ascribing priority to universalism values relates positively to approval of homosexuality.

- Self-transcendence values encompass tolerance, understanding, and appreciation of all individuals (universalism values) and caring for the welfare of close others (benevolence values) (Schwartz, 1992, 2006).
- Universalism values imply tolerance and acceptance of those who differ from oneself, understanding for rather than rejection of those with unconventional lifestyles.
- Universalism values emphasize equal opportunities for all.
- Although benevolence values also express concern for the welfare of others, this concern focuses on ingroup members.
- Hence, priority for universalism but not benevolence values is relevant to approval of homosexuality.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 4: Ascribing priority to power values relates negatively to approval of homosexuality.

- In contrast, self-enhancement values encompass pursuit of self-interest, either through dominating others (power) or attaining personal success (achievement) (Schwartz, 1992, 1994).
- Valuing power implies pursuit of superiority for self and an absence of sympathy for those one dominates.
- Prejudice against weak or unconventional groups such as homosexuals is a way to assert one's superiority.
- Power values underlie and correlate positively with authoritarianism and social dominance orientation (e.g., Cohrs et al., 2005; Feather & McKee, 2012), both of which correlate with disapproval of unconventional groups (Feather & McKee, 2012).
- Achievement values concern gaining social approval for one's success but not dominating others (Schwartz, 1992).
- Hence, priority for power but not achievement values is relevant to approval of homosexuality.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 5: Approval of homosexuality is higher in countries whose legal system is more progressive toward homosexuality.

- In the short run, individuals adapt their behavior to the new laws because they know that otherwise they will be sanctioned.
- Changed behavioral patterns lead, in turn, to changed attitudes in order to avoid cognitive dissonance (e.g., Allport, 1954).
- In the long run, laws and policies against discrimination of homosexuals institutionalize tolerant norms (Allport, 1954; van den Akker et al., 2013).
- They create a changed atmosphere in which the law recognizes homosexuality as legitimate and conveys the expectation that individuals reconsider negative attitudes toward homosexuality (Altemeyer, 2002; Stangor, 2000).
- Moreover, as homosexuality becomes more visible in everyday life, the increased familiarity with it may directly enhance approval, in line with the “mere exposure effect” (Zajonc, 1968).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 6a: Individuals' value priorities relate less strongly to approval of homosexuality the more progressive the legal system is in a country.

- Laws prohibiting discrimination against homosexuals and giving them equal rights promote tolerant norms toward homosexuality and provide a legal framework that supports them.
- In the absence of such laws, individuals are exposed to a variety of public views from which to formulate their own opinions on homosexuality.
- The religious establishment and traditions continue to promote opposition to homosexuality (Finke & Adamczyk, 2008; Pickel, 2001), but other sources such as NGOs and the European Union promote more liberal views.
- Some define homosexuality as an illness or perverse choice, whereas others consider it normal and the subject of unfair discrimination.
- In the presence of legal regulations that clearly legitimize homosexuality, choice based on individual dispositions is less likely to determine approval of homosexuality.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 6b: That individuals' value priorities relate more strongly to approval of homosexuality the more progressive the legal system in the country is toward homosexuality .

- Contrary to hypothesis H6a, it is possible to argue that progressive laws toward homosexuality would increase, rather than decrease, the effects of values on approval of homosexuality.
- Granting legal rights to homosexuals might increase the symbolic and practical threat they pose to the status quo.
- It might therefore intensify rejection and disapproval of homosexuality among those who endorse conservation values.
- Granting homosexuals legal rights, however, may change the normative atmosphere and free those who endorse openness to change values to express their value priorities by approving of homosexuality.

Data and Method

Data:

- European Social Survey (ESS): Fifth Round (2010/2011)
- ESS employs a multistage random sampling design and conducts face-to-face interviews with representative samples of residents aged 15 years and over.
- Data was analyzed from 27 European countries and regions:

Country (N)	Country (N)	Country (N)	Country (N)
Belgium (1,704)	Finland (1,878)	Lithuania (1,677)	Slovenia (1,403)
Bulgaria (2,434)	France (1,728)	Netherlands (1,829)	Slovakia (1,856)
Croatia (1,649)	Germany East (1,056)	Norway (1,548)	Spain (1,885)
Cyprus (1,083)	Germany West (1,975)	Poland (1,751)	Switzerland (1,506)
Czech Republic (2,386)	Greece (2,715)	Portugal (2,150)	Ukraine (1,931)
Denmark (1,576)	Hungary (1,561)	Russia (2,595)	United Kingdom (2,422)
Estonia (1,793)	Ireland (2,576)	Sweden (1,497)	

Measurement – Description of Items (Homosexuality)

- **Approval of homosexuality** was measured with the item that refers to giving equal rights to gays and lesbians in choosing their lifestyles:
 - “...to what extent do you agree or disagree ... [that] gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish?”
- 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*agree strongly*) to 5 (*disagree strongly*)
- Item was coded: higher values indicated greater approval of homosexuality

Measurement – Description of Items (Individual value priorities)

- Values (**Individual value priorities**) were measured with the 21-item ESS Human Values Scale (Schwartz, 2003)
- Each item consists of a two sentence verbal portrait that describes a gender-matched person in terms of his or her motivations, goals, or aspirations.
- Universalism item:
 - “It is important to her to listen to people who are different from her. Even when she disagrees with them, she still wants to understand them.”
- Respondents indicate how similar this person is to them on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*very much like me*) to 6 (*not like me at all*).
- Respondents’ own values are inferred from the values of those they view as similar to themselves.
- Six items measured the higher order **conservation value**.
- Six items measured the higher order **openness to change value**.
- Three items measured the **universalism value**.
- Two items measured the **power value**.

Measurement – Description of Items (Religiosity)

- Operationalized **religiosity** in two ways:
 1. Respondents' self-reported religiosity on a scale ranging from 0 (*not at all religious*) to 10 (*very religious*)
 2. Respondents' self-reported frequency of attendance at religious services, measured on a seven-point scale
(1 = Every day, 2 = More than once a week, 3 = Once a week, 4 = At least once a month, 5 = Only on special holy days, 6 = Less often, 7 = Never).
- Item was recoded: higher values indicated a greater frequency

Measurement – Description of Items (Religious Affiliation, Education, Gender and Age)

- Seven dummy variables were coded with **no religious affiliation** as reference category:
- Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Other Christian denominations, Eastern denominations, Muslim, and Other Non-Christian denominations.

Education

- Respondents were assigned to one of three **educational groups**, based on the ISCED coding:
- low (ISCED 0 – 2), medium (3 – 4), and high (5 – 8).
- We used low education as the reference category and dummy variables for the other levels.
- **Gender:** Male = 0, female = 1
- **Age:** Respondent's age in full years

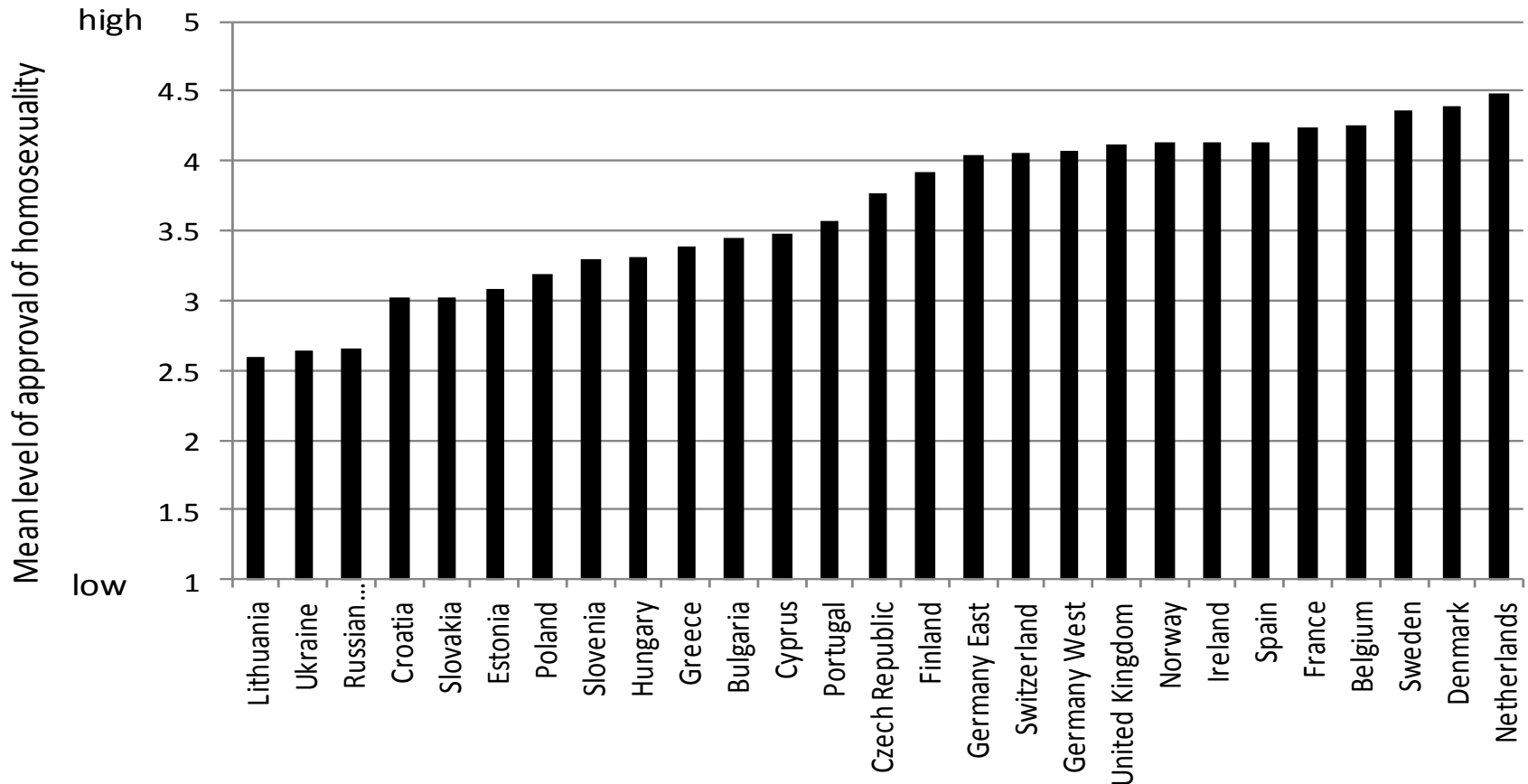
Measurement – Description of ILGA (Legal Regulation of Homosexuality)

- Measure the **legal regulation of homosexuality: Rainbow Europe Country Index 2010 (ILGA)** provided by the European unit of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex Association (ILGA Europe, 2010).
- ILGA varies from -4 (*least progressive*) to +10 (*most progressive*).
- It assesses four dimensions:
 - 1) anti-discrimination legislation referring to sexual orientation,
 - 2) recognition of partnership of same-sex couples,
 - 3) parenting rights for same-sex couples,
 - 4) the application of criminal law to hate speeches or crimes against people of a different sexual orientation.
- It assigns varying numbers of points to each dimension.
- For example, legal recognition of same-sex marriage adds three points to a country's ILGA score, legality of registered partnerships adds two, and legality of cohabitation one.

Measurement – Description of ILGA (Legal Regulation of Homosexuality)

- The ILGA assigns one negative point to a country for each of the following:
 - 1) violations of freedom of assembly for homosexuals,
 - 2) violations of freedom of association or expression for homosexuals,
 - 3) illegality of same sex acts,
 - 4) different ages of consent for homosexual and heterosexual couples.
- Controlled for two country-level variables
- **Former communist regime** and **country religiosity**, because both have been linked to disapproval of homosexuality (e.g., Jäckle & Wenzelburger, 2011; Kon, 1993; Stulhofer & Sandfort, 2005).
- Operationalized **country-level religiosity** as the mean self-reported **religiosity** of the country sample.
- We treated **former communist regime** as a dummy variable with 1 = former communist regime and 0 = otherwise.

Results - Approval of Homosexuality in 27 European Countries



Note: Responses to the question: "...to what extent do you agree or disagree ... [that] gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish?" (1 = disagree strongly to 5 = agree strongly).

ESS round 5, 2010 (total N = 47,428).

Results - Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Approval of Homosexuality

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 4c	Model 4d	Model 5a	Model 5b	Model 5c	Model 5d
Intercept	-.015	-.014	.003	-.001	.002	.000	.002	-.001	.002	.000	.002
Individual-level Controls											
Education											
Low	<i>Reference</i>										
Medium	.069***	.054***	.055***	.054***	.054***	.053***	.055***	.055***	.054***	.053***	.055***
High	.125***	.096***	.096***	.097***	.095***	.095***	.096***	.097***	.095***	.095***	.096***
Age	-.161***	-.135***	-.135***	-.133***	-.133***	-.134***	-.134***	-.133***	-.133***	-.134***	-.134***
Female	.090***	.086***	.086***	.086***	.087***	.086***	.086***	.086***	.087***	.086***	.086***
Religious importance	-.061***	-.059***	-.059***	-.060***	-.059***	-.060***	-.059***	-.060***	-.059***	-.060***	-.059***
Attendance at religious services	-.103***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***	-.095***

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$

Results - Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Approval of Homosexuality

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 4c	Model 4d	Model 5a	Model 5b	Model 5c	Model 5d
Religious Denominations											
None	<i>Reference</i>										
Catholic	-.011 ⁺	.001	.001	.000	.002	.001	.001	-.000	.002	.001	.002
Protestant	-.014**	-.008	-.008	-.009 ⁺	-.010*	-.008	-.008	-.009 ⁺	-.010*	-.008	-.008
Orthodox	-.050***	-.041***	-.040***	-.036***	-.039***	-.039***	-.040***	-.036***	-.039***	-.039***	-.040***
Other Christian	-.031***	-.031***	-.031***	-.031***	-.030***	-.030***	-.031***	-.031***	-.030***	-.030**	-.030**
Eastern	.003	.003	.003	.002	.003	.003	.003	.002	.003	.003	.003
Other Non-Christian	-.001	-.003	-.003	-.003	-.002	-.002	-.003	-.003	-.002	-.002	-.003
Muslim	-.067***	-.061***	-.061***	-.060***	-.060***	-.060***	-.061***	-.060***	-.060***	-.060***	-.061***

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, ⁺ $p < .10$

Results - Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Approval of Homosexuality

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 4c	Model 4d	Model 5a	Model 5b	Model 5c	Model 5d
Individual Value Priorities											
Conservation (CONS)		-.087***	-.087***	-.091***	-.087***	-.085***	-.087***	-.092***	-.087***	-.085***	-.087***
Openness to Change (OPEN)		.069***	.069***	.068***	.068***	.067***	.069***	.067***	.068***	.067***	.069***
Universalism (UN)		.123***	.123***	.127***	.123***	.126***	.123***	.128***	.123***	.126***	.122***
Power (PO)		-.036***	-.038***	-.037***	.040***	-.035***	-.038***	-.036***	-.040***	-.035***	-.038***
Country-level Controls											
Former Communist Regime			-.293***	-.237***	-.292***	-.251***	-.292***	-.237***	-.292***	.251***	-.292***
Level of religiosity			-.099*	-.086*	-.099*	-.087*	-.098*	-.085*	-.099*	-.087*	-.098*
Legal regulation (ILGA)			.128*	.122*	.127*	.135**	.128*	.170**	.130*	.159**	.129*
<i>CONS*ILGA</i>								.023*			
<i>OPEN*ILGA</i>									-.027**		
<i>UN*ILGA</i>										.013	
<i>PO*ILGA</i>											-.001

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$

Results - Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Approval of Homosexuality

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 4c	Model 4d	Model 5a	Model 5b	Model 5c	Model 5d
Variance Components											
Residual Variance	.706***	.687***	.687***	.684***	.685***	.684***	.687***	.684***	.685***	.684***	.687***
Random Intercept	.195***	.197***	.032***	.036***	.032***	.033***	.032***	.034***	.032***	.033***	.032***
Random Slope CONS				.003***				.002***			
Random Slope OPEN					.002***				.001***		
Random Slope UN						.003***				.003***	
Random Slope PO							.000**				.000**
Explained Variance^a											
reduction of residual variance	10 %	13 %	13 %	13 %	13 %	13 %	13 %	13 %	13 %	13 %	13 %
reduction of intercept variance	10 %	9 %	85 %	83 %	85 %	85 %	85 %	85 %	85 %	85 %	85 %

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$

Results - Multilevel Regression Models Predicting Approval of Homosexuality

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4a	Model 4b	Model 4c	Model 4d	Model 5a	Model 5b	Model 5c	Model 5d
Model Comparison											
2LogLikelihood	113396.07	112151.771	112102.851	111949.236	112026.274	111953.904	112096.224	111944.817	112015.816	111952.499	112096.160
Difference											
2LogLikelihood	4962.223 ^b	1244.723 ⁶	48.920	153.615 ^c	76.577 ^c	148.947 ^c	6.627 ^c	4.419 ^d	10.458 ^e	1.405 ^f	0.064 ^g
Difference df	13	4	3	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1
p-value (one-tailed)	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.001	< 0.05	< 0.05	< 0.01	n.s.	n.s.

Note: N (individuals) = 45,474, N (countries) = 27; all variables were standardized prior to model estimation;

Source: ESS round 5, 2010.

^aReduction in variances compared to the residual components of the empty model;

Residual variance $\sigma = .788$; random intercept variance: τ (intercept) = .217.

^bImprovement in model fit compared to empty model: 2LogLikelihood = 118358.230, degrees of freedom (dF) = 3.

^cImprovement in model fit compared to Model 3.

^dImprovement in model fit compared to Model 4a.

^eImprovement in model fit compared to Model 4b.

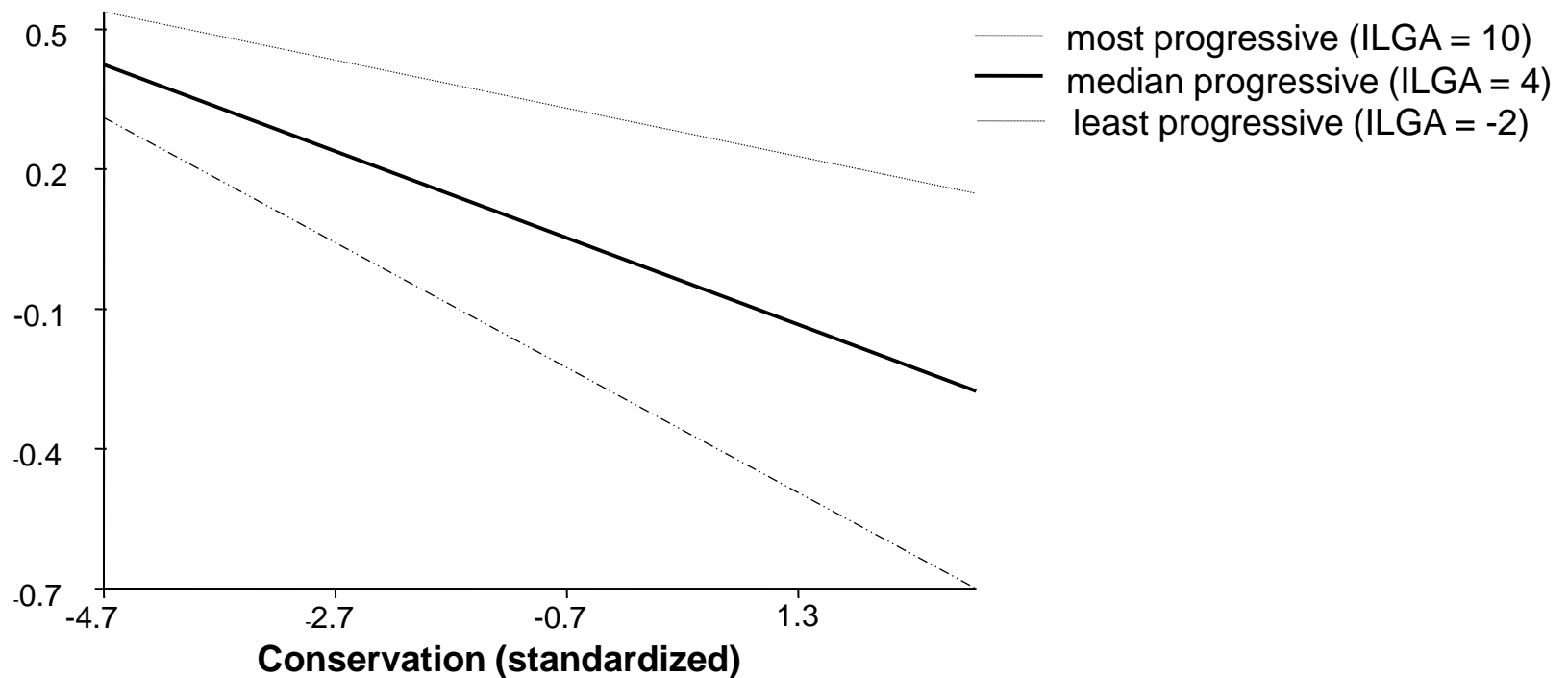
^fImprovement in model fit compared to Model 4c.

^gImprovement in model fit compared to Model 4d.

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, + $p < .10$

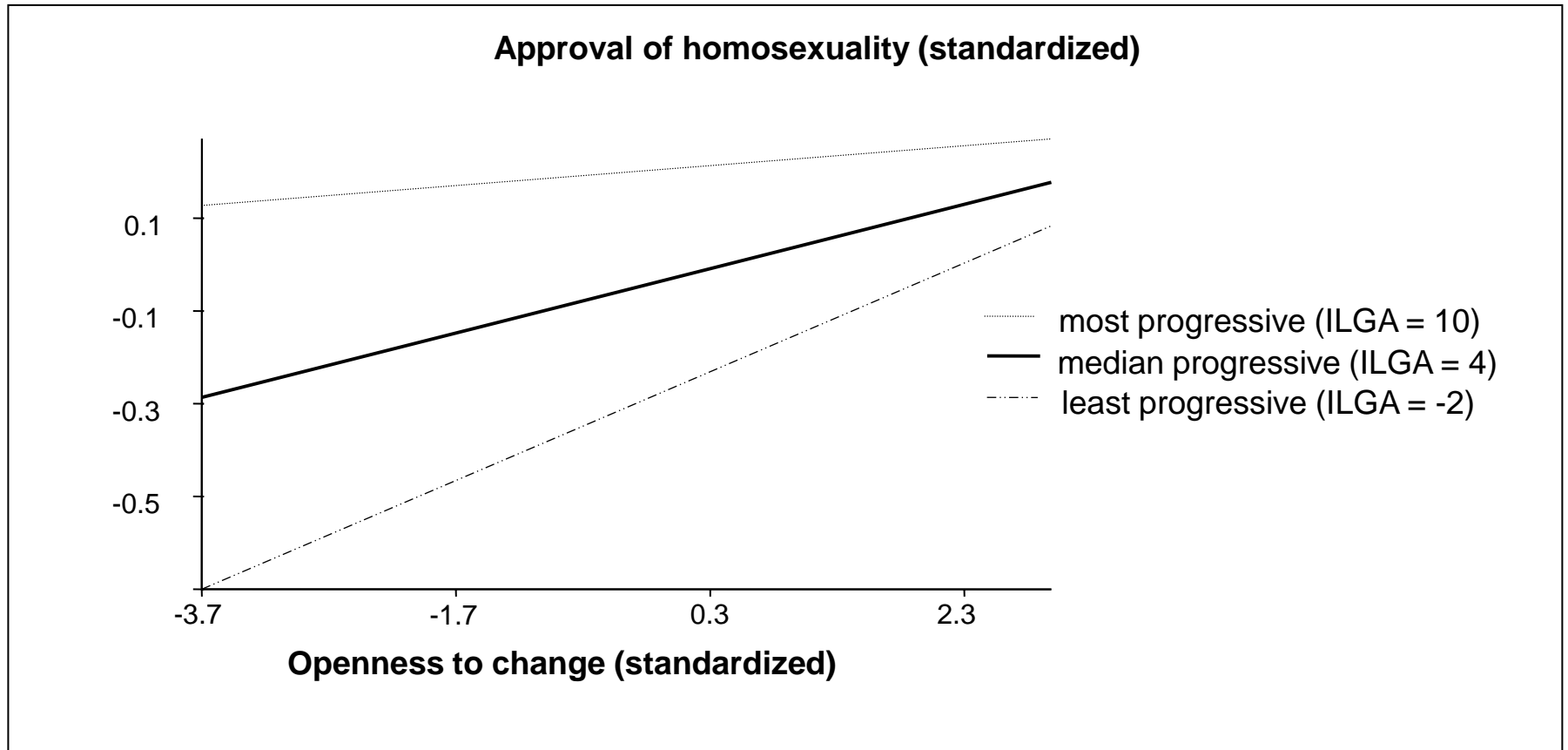
Results - Relations of Conservation Values to Approval of Homosexuality as a Function of Countries' Legal Regulation of Homosexuality

Approval of homosexuality (standardized)



Note: ESS round 5, 2010; N (individuals) = 45,474; N (countries) = 27

Results - Relations of Openness to Change Values to Approval of Homosexuality as a Function of Countries' Legal Regulation of Homosexuality



Note: ESS round 5, 2010; N (individuals) = 45,474; N (countries) = 27

Discussion

- At the country level, progressive regulation of homosexuality was associated with greater approval of homosexuality.
- This underscores the potential role of the legal system in combating prejudice.
- Of course, more liberal attitudes and national policies may have mutual causal effects on one another.
- Coleman's (1990) boat hypothesis suggests a feedback loop in which country-level characteristics shape individual attitudes, which, in turn, affect behavior that influences the country-level characteristics.
- Thus, progressive laws may promote positive attitudes toward homosexuals that promote positive behavior that feeds back to progressive laws.
- In many European countries, however, progressive changes in laws regulating homosexuality have taken place as a response to directives of the European Union and may not reflect attitude change within the country (see also Pettigrew, 1979; Schlüter et al., 2013).
- Assessing this assumption requires panel studies.

Discussion

- Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study was the moderation of the effects of particular individual values on approval of homosexuality by the legal regulation of homosexuality in countries.
- The more progressive the regulations, the weaker the effects of individuals' conservation and openness to change values are on their approval of homosexuality.
- This fits the reasoning behind hypothesis H6a that individuals rely less on their own values to form attitudes to the extent that legal regulations prescribe the attitude that is socially expected.
- These results are also in line with findings from previous research that identified boundary conditions for the effects of value priorities:
 - Individuals tended to behave in conformity with normative expectations, regardless of their own value priorities, when a value or behavior was widely sanctioned, whether positively or negatively (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003).
- Future research should examine moderation of the relations of values to approval of homosexuality by other potential country-level moderators (e.g., gay pride parades, sympathetic portrayals of homosexuals in the media) that may affect the normative environment.

Discussion

- The present study identified specific values that correlate with approval of homosexuality and suggested mechanisms through which the values may influence these attitudes.
- It also revealed that policies moderate the effects of particular values on approval of homosexuality.
- Highly progressive policies apparently reduce opposition to homosexuality even among people with strong conformity values that inherently oppose it.

**Thank you
for your attention!**