


# Predictors of Attitudes Toward Gay Men and Lesbian Women in 23 Countries

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## Abstract

Dominant accounts of sexual prejudice posit that negative attitudes toward nonheterosexual individuals are stronger for male (vs. female) targets, higher among men (vs. women), and driven, in part, by the perception that gay men and lesbian women violate traditional gender norms. We test these predictions in 23 countries, representing both Western and non-Western societies. Results show that (1) gay men are disliked more than lesbian women across all countries; (2) after adjusting for endorsement of traditional gender norms, the relationship between participant gender and sexual prejudice is inconsistent across Western countries, but men (vs. women) in non-Western countries consistently report more negative attitudes toward gay men; and (3) a significant association between gender norm endorsement and sexual prejudice across countries, but it was absent or reversed in China, India, and South Korea. Taken together, this work suggests that gender and sexuality may be more loosely associated in some non-Western contexts.

## Keywords

sexual prejudice, homonegativity, LGB, gender, gender norms

Across the globe, nonheterosexual men and women face pervasive discrimination and severe hostility, including violence (Carnaghi, Maass, & Fasoli, 2011; Franklin, 2004; Herek, Gillis, & Cogan, 1999; Meyer, 2010; Parrott, Peterson, & Bakeman, 2011). Same-sex sexual activity is illegal in over 70 countries and punishable by death in some of these places (Amnesty International, 2018; International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, [ILGA], n.d.).

For at least the last 50 years, social scientists have been aiming to understand the underpinnings of prejudice and violence toward sexual minorities (e.g., Herek, 1990, 2004; Kite & Deaux, 1986). Findings from this work suggests that men are more likely to be both the targets and perpetrators of sexual prejudice (Herek, 2002, 2007; Kite & Whitley, 1998; Whitley, 2001, 2009), and attitudes toward sexual minorities are robustly related to beliefs about the gender system, more broadly (e.g., Davies, 2004; Harbaugh & Lindsey, 2015; Kimmel, 1997). The bulk of this research, however, has been conducted in North America and Western Europe. Given that sexual prejudice is a global issue, it is important to know whether the current social psychological models are applicable to understanding attitudes toward sexual minorities in general, including in understudied populations. In the current work, we investigate the relationships between gender, beliefs about gender norms, and attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women in 23 countries (with *N*s ranging from 485 to 1,098), including

both Western and non-Western populations (see Table 1 for list of countries).

## Gender Norms and Sexual Prejudice

Gender norms are widely shared societal and cultural beliefs distinguishing personality traits, behaviors, and interests as appropriate and desirable for either men or women but not both (Deaux & Kite, 1987; Whitley, 2001). Traditional gender norms expect men behaving in strong and agentic ways, whereas women being more passive and communal (Eagly & Mladinic, 1989). Both men and women violating traditional gender norms are subject to backlash (Deaux & Kite, 1987; Gordon & Meyer, 2007; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004), although work suggests that social repercussions for gender atypical behavior are especially harsh for men (Sirin, McCreary, & Mahalik, 2004; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Bur-naford, & Weaver, 2008).

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**Table 1.** Sample Details and Means (and Standard Deviations) for Focal Variables.

Country	LGB Rights	N	% Female	Age	Attitudes		
					Gay Men	Lesbian Women	Gender Norms
<b>Western countries</b>							
Argentina	0.785	498	43.8	37.19 (12.80)	5.58 (2.44)	5.73 (2.31)	4.21 (1.98)
Australia	0.857	981	50.2	46.16 (12.60)	5.58 (2.21)	5.86 (2.02)	4.14 (1.75)
Belgium	1.000	495	56.8	43.76 (12.03)	5.82 (1.86)	5.99 (1.77)	4.02 (1.68)
Brazil	0.928	991	57.5	37.82 (12.77)	5.09 (2.64)	5.28 (2.56)	4.86 (2.12)
Canada	0.857	1002	54.3	45.17 (11.91)	5.65 (2.07)	5.89 (1.93)	3.90 (1.75)
France	1.000	994	58.0	43.46 (12.49)	5.43 (1.91)	5.58 (1.83)	4.05 (1.73)
Germany	0.785	996	50.3	43.40 (12.68)	5.21 (1.94)	5.50 (1.75)	4.41 (1.64)
Great Britain	0.928	985	47.3	43.02 (12.55)	5.83 (2.01)	5.97 (1.88)	3.95 (1.87)
Hungary	0.714	485	43.1	42.92 (13.46)	3.72 (1.97)	4.56 (1.72)	5.77 (1.43)
Italy	0.714	991	46.6	42.40 (13.05)	5.39 (1.99)	5.54 (1.92)	4.60 (1.66)
Mexico	0.857	491	44.8	35.09 (11.86)	5.32 (2.30)	5.52 (2.21)	4.91 (1.91)
Peru	0.571	497	43.1	31.08 (10.15)	4.19 (2.31)	4.47 (2.24)	5.26 (1.76)
Poland	0.571	493	50.7	42.51 (12.64)	4.51 (2.34)	5.01 (2.19)	5.70 (1.45)
Spain	0.928	984	49.4	41.12 (12.06)	6.12 (1.97)	6.22 (1.94)	3.49 (1.94)
Sweden	1.000	490	46.5	46.17 (12.52)	5.76 (2.16)	5.96 (1.95)	3.35 (1.76)
United States	0.928	1,000	48.8	43.65 (13.41)	5.23 (2.42)	5.53 (2.34)	4.46 (1.94)
<b>Non-Western countries</b>							
China	0.285	1,000	49.1	36.83 (11.01)	4.71 (2.31)	5.03 (2.12)	6.22 (1.18)
India	0.285	569	48.0	35.81 (12.62)	5.31 (2.45)	5.40 (2.37)	5.87 (1.80)
Japan	0.500	1,098	47.5	43.07 (12.53)	5.02 (1.38)	5.22 (1.34)	4.69 (1.22)
Russia	0.285	500	50.2	41.89 (12.11)	2.76 (2.05)	3.63 (2.08)	6.80 (1.48)
South Africa	1.000	591	56.9	37.83 (12.87)	4.57 (2.47)	4.91 (2.45)	4.94 (1.79)
South Korea	0.428	501	42.3	42.88 (10.84)	4.21 (1.92)	4.50 (1.80)	4.15 (1.69)
Turkey	0.285	499	49.3	33.29 (10.20)	4.07 (2.73)	4.41 (2.60)	5.71 (1.91)

Note. LGB rights is a country-level index, where higher numbers indicate greater rights. Attitudes are measured on 1 to 9 scales, where higher numbers indicate positive attitudes toward gay men/lesbian women and higher endorsement of gender norms.

Gender norms prescribe behaviors that fuel a heteronormative system—that is, men and women conforming to norms are seen as “complements” to one another, and this makes heterosexual coupling seem necessary and normal (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick et al., 2000; Ingraham, 2006; Jackson, 2006; Rich, 1980). Thus, gender norms appear intrinsically tied to beliefs about sexuality. This is reflected in the earliest psychological theories about homosexuality, which presumed that same-sex attraction was caused by an overidentification with the other-sex parent (e.g., Ellis, 1915; Freud, 1905/1953). While no contemporary evidence supports the idea that upbringing influences people’s sexuality, there persists a lay notion that nonheterosexual individuals are gender nonconforming and vice versa (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Kite & Deaux, 1987; Wong, McCreary, Carpenter, Engle, & Korchynsky, 1999).

The desire to preserve a heteronormative gender system seems to underlie sexual prejudice, at least in Western societies (Gordon & Meyer, 2007). For instance, a study of Dutch adolescents found that acceptance of gender nonconformity is associated with positive attitudes toward sexual minorities (Collier, Bos, & Sandfort, 2012). Studies of American college students find that both men and women endorsing traditional gender arrangements (e.g., hostile and benevolent sexism, modern sexism, hypermasculinity/hyperfemininity) also reported more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities

(Nagoshi et al., 2008; Whitley, 2001). Another study found that the endorsement of traditionally masculine gender norms among male and female college students in Mexico and Germany predicts bias against gay men and lesbian women in both countries (Parrott, 2009; Steffens, Jonas, & Denger, 2015; Vincent, Parrott, & Peterson, 2011).

In modern, Western societies, homonegative sentiments appear embedded in gender norms for men (i.e., masculinity norms; Goodnight, Cook, Parrott, & Peterson, 2014; Herek, 1986; Kimmel, 1997; Wilkinson, 2004). In other words, harboring prejudicial attitudes toward sexual minorities is part of the social construction of what it means to “be a man.” In support of this, several experimental studies documented a link between masculinity and prejudice. For instance, threatening men’s masculinity leads to increased levels of homonegativity and antigay aggression (Kelley & Gruenewald, 2015; O’Connor, Ford, & Banos, 2017; Parrott, 2009; Vincent et al., 2011). On the flip side, mere exposure to homophobic epithets lead men to exaggerate their masculinity (Carnaghi et al., 2011).

## Gender and Sexual Prejudice

Perhaps because of the link between homophobia and gender norms for men, research found that men (vs. women)

consistently report more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities, both in the United States (Davies, 2004; Potat & Anderson, 2012; Whitley, 2001, 2009) and in Europe (Ciocca et al., 2017; Lingardi, Falanga, & D'Augelli, 2005; van den Akker, van der Ploeg, & Scheepers, 2013). This is true even after statistically adjusting for the typical gender gap in endorsement of traditional gender norms (with women less supportive than men; Herek, 1988).

The association between gender and sexual prejudice also emerged in cross-cultural investigations of sexual prejudice (e.g., Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009), with men reporting less tolerant attitudes about "homosexuality" than women across 40 societies included in the World Values Survey (WVS). However, few multinational studies examined how this association might vary as a function of culture. Studies conducted outside of the United States and Europe suggest that it might not always be that men are more prejudice than women. For instance, one study showed that women were slightly higher on sexual prejudice than men in a large sample of undergraduate students in northeastern Brazil (Proulx, 1997). More recently, analyses conducted on a large sample of adolescents and young adults in Hanoi, Shanghai, and Taipei found that gender was unrelated to attitudes about sexual minorities, although overall prejudice was high (Feng et al., 2012). Thus, there is a reason to suspect that the higher levels of sexual prejudice among men (vs. women) found in Western societies may not generalize to other populations.

## Sexual Prejudice Toward Gay Men Versus Lesbian Women

Extant research suggests that men are not only more likely to be the perpetrators of sexual prejudice but also its victims. Compared to lesbian women, attitudes toward gay men are especially negative, at least in the United States (Herek, 2002; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Whitley, 2001) and Italy (Pistella, Tanzilli, Ioverno, Lingardi, & Baiocco, 2018). On the person level, studies conducted in the United States find that men tend to report more negative attitudes toward gay men (vs. lesbian women), whereas women do not differentiate (Herek, 2000, 2002; LaMar & Kite, 1998; Span & Vidal, 2003; but see Proulx, 1997, for a different pattern in Brazil).

The difference in attitudes toward male versus female sexual minorities is relatively understudied cross-culturally. This is because most large-scale surveys do not differentiate and simply ask respondents about "homosexuals," which is likely interpreted as referring to gay men (Herek, 2002; Kite & Whitley, 1998; MacDonald & Games, 1974). This lack of data may reflect bigger issues, namely, women exclusion in the public sphere in general (Perez, 2019) and lesbian women invisibility specifically (Guth, 1978; Lamble, 2009).

## Global Attitudes

Several studies have examined sexual prejudice cross-culturally, often using the WVS (asking respondents to rate the

"justifiability of homosexuality," from "never justifiable" to "always justifiable"), yielding many interesting insights regarding cultural variation. For instance, one investigation found that increasing income inequality leads to lower sexual prejudice among upper middle-class individuals but higher prejudice among those in the working class (Andersen & Fetner 2008). Another study showed that religion is a stronger predictor of sexual prejudice in self-expressive cultures (like the United States) as compared to more "survivalist" cultures (i.e., countries with high economic or political insecurity), although overall prejudice tends to be higher in the latter countries (Adamczyk & Pitt, 2009).

Few cross-national studies examined the connection between (the rejection of) traditional gender beliefs and (positive) attitudes toward sexual minorities on the individual level, but this relationship appears at the macrolevel (Henry & Steiger, 2019; Henry & Wetherell, 2017). Specifically, above and beyond a host of country-level differences (including religiosity, political and economic development), gender equality on a country level (measured by the Gender Global Gap Index) is positively associated with (1) positive attitudes toward homosexuality among the general public (measured by aggregating individual data from the WVS) and (2) stronger legal protections for sexual minorities (Henry & Wetherell, 2017). These relationships were also found on a smaller scale, such that U.S. cities with greater gender equality (measured by the gender wage gap) are the most progressive in terms of laws and services for sexual minorities (Henry & Steiger, 2019).

While this work is in line with the thesis that attitudes about sexual minorities mirror gender norms, effects on a macrolevel could be absent (or even reversed) on the individual (or "micro-") level (Okulicz-Kozaryn, Holmes, & Avery, 2014). Sexual prejudice is a reflection of heterosexist cultural values and norms (Herek, 2007; Kimmel, 1997), and it is conceivable that there is variation across cultures in how much people associate gender and sexuality. Whereas Western conceptualizations of gender norms (especially masculinity) are predicated on heteronormative gender differentiation (Herek, 1986), this may not be the case elsewhere (e.g., Goffman, 1979).

## The Current Research

Using data from 23 countries, we examine how both gender and beliefs about gender norms relate to attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. Specifically, we test three findings from past research (generally referring to Western populations) and examine whether they replicate across countries, namely, that (1) attitudes about gay men (vs. lesbian women) are more negative, (2) men (vs. women) are more prejudice against sexual minorities, and (3) endorsement of traditional gender norms is positively associated with sexual prejudice.

Cross-national investigations of sexual prejudice generally rely on large-scale surveys, and the questions asked in these surveys may fail to capture cross-cultural nuances. In particular, the labels describing sexual minorities (i.e., "homosexual"; "gay") may be confounded in many cultural contexts (Haddad,

2016). These labels could also be interpreted as mainly referring to men (Kite & Whitley, 1998; MacDonald & Games, 1974). In commissioning our own survey, we were able to avoid potentially derogatory labels and to assess attitudes toward non-heterosexual men and women separately, allowing us to test whether prejudice varies as function of target gender.

## Method

### Participants

Data were collected through IPSOS Global Advisor (n.d.) monthly syndicate service, which fields survey questions to citizens of 25 countries, with sample sizes of 500 or 1,000 per country. Data are collected online. Samples are representative of the national population in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Japan, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the United States. Online samples from countries with lower Internet penetration (Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Turkey) are more urban, educated, and have higher income than the national population.

We were not able to field our questions in Israel and Saudi Arabia, thus the survey yielded data from 17,131 participants residing in 23 different countries (see Table 1 for the sample sizes for each country).

### Procedure

The following procedure, including IPSOS Global Advisor recruitment procedure, was approved by the New York University Abu Dhabi Institutional Review Board. IPSOS panelists are referred through online suppliers and received an invitation to take a survey including our items. Prior to the commencement of our survey items, panelists provided informed consent to participate in our study. Data were collected over 2 weeks in December 2018.

The survey questions were designed by the authors after consulting with individuals who previously conducted research on attitudes toward sexual minorities in international surveys. The questions were written in English and translated by professional translators from IPSOS. The questions relevant to the current research, which were embedded in a larger survey, assessed attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women and the importance of adhering to traditional gender norms.<sup>1</sup>

Table S1 in the Supplementary Materials lists correlations among all the variables for each country. Participants rated how they feel toward several groups, on a scale from 1 (*extremely negative*) to 9 (*extremely positive*), including gay men (described as “a man who is romantically or sexually attracted to other men”) and lesbian women (“a woman who is romantically or sexually attracted to other women”). This wording was suggested by ILGA to avoid using terms (e.g., “gay,” “homosexual”) that have derogatory connotations in some places.

Participants also rated the importance (from 1 = *not at all important* to 9 = *extremely important*) of adhering to 10 gender

norms, including “men should not be too emotional,” “men should not be too affectionate,” “a man should never admit when others hurt his feelings,” “men should be able to fix most things around the house,” “boys should play with trucks rather than dolls,” “men should be physically tough,” “men should act masculine,” “women should act feminine,” “women should be caring and nurturing,” and “women should not be too dominant.” These 10 items formed a reliable measure in all 23 countries (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ s range from .837 to .958), and thus, we computed an average gender norm endorsement score for each participant (see Supplementary Materials for factor analyses).

In addition to our focal variables, we included adjustments for demographic characteristics that have been shown to relate to sexual prejudice in previous work, including age, education and income (both measured on a 3-point scale), and religiosity (measured on a 5-point scale). All continuous individual-level variables were centered on the country mean (i.e., “group-centered”). Ipsos does not collect data on race and/or ethnicity.

We also included a country-level measure of tolerance toward sexual minorities. Following previous recent work (Henry & Wetherell, 2017), we used data from ILGA (n.d.), which rates each country on seven types of laws regarding sexual orientation: legality of same-sex sexuality activity for men, legality of same-sex sexual activity for women, legal recognition of same-sex relationships, same-sex marriage, adoption, military service, and antidiscrimination laws (see Henry & Wetherell, 2017, for more details). For each category, a country received a 1 if the law was favorable to sexual minorities, a 0 if the law was unfavorable, and .5 if the protection was mixed or limited. We computed the average of these seven ratings obtaining an index of LGB (lesbian, gay, and bisexual) rights.

## Results

We first compared attitudes toward gay men versus lesbian women as a function of participant gender and country. Specifically, we conducted a repeated-measures analysis of variance with target gender as a within-subjects factor and participant gender and country as between-subjects factors. Expectedly, there was a significant effect of country,  $F(22, 16,711) = 75.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = .090$ . In examining the simple comparison of overall attitudes (i.e., men and women’s prejudice toward male and female targets combined), we thought it is worth mentioning the outliers on both sides: Positive attitudes toward sexual minorities in Russia ( $M = 3.20, SE = .90$ ) are significantly lower than in any other country ( $ps < .001$ ), whereas positivity in Spain ( $M = 6.18, SE = .07$ ) is significantly higher than in any other country ( $ps < .013$ ). Because the United States is the most studied country, it is also worth noting that its position relative to the rest of the nations is neither especially high nor low. Specifically, respondents from the United States reported more negative attitudes compared to those in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Great Britain, Spain, and Sweden ( $ps < .006$ ); more positive attitudes

**Table 2.** Mean Differences (and Standard Errors), *p* Values, and 95% Confidence Intervals for Differences in Attitudes Toward Gay Men Versus Lesbian Women as a Function of Participant Gender and Country, from Lowest to Highest.

Country	Male Participants			Female Participants		
	$M_{diff}$ (SE)	<i>p</i>	95% CI <sub>meandiff</sub>	$M_{diff}$ (SE)	<i>p</i>	95% CI <sub>meandiff</sub>
Spain	−0.14 (.06)	.014	[−0.25, −0.03]	−0.08 (.06)	.181	[−0.19, 0.04]
Argentina	−0.21 (.07)	.005	[−0.36, −0.06]	−0.07 (.09)	.409	[−0.24, −0.10]
Italy	−0.26 (.06)	<.001	[−0.37, −0.16]	−0.03 (.06)	.647	[−0.14, 0.09]
Great Britain	−0.27 (.06)	<.001	[−0.37, −0.16]	0.02 (.06)	.880	[−0.11, 0.12]
India	−0.27 (.07)	<.001	[−0.41, −0.13]	0.06 (.08)	.454	[−0.09, 0.21]
France	−0.29 (.06)	<.001	[−0.40, −0.16]	−0.05 (.05)	.357	[−0.15, 0.06]
Japan	−0.34 (.05)	<.001	[−0.44, −0.24]	−0.06 (.06)	.285	[−0.17, 0.05]
Sweden	−0.34 (.08)	<.001	[−0.49, −0.19]	−0.03 (.08)	.706	[−0.19, 0.13]
Mexico	−0.36 (.08)	<.001	[−0.51, −0.21]	0.02 (.08)	.786	[0.14, 0.19]
Belgium	−0.36 (.09)	<.001	[−0.52, −0.19]	−0.04 (.07)	.596	[−0.19, 0.11]
Brazil	−0.38 (.06)	<.001	[−0.50, −0.26]	−0.03 (.05)	.532	[−0.14, 0.07]
Canada	−0.48 (.06)	<.001	[−0.60, −0.37]	−0.03 (.05)	.552	[−0.14, 0.07]
Peru	−0.48 (.08)	<.001	[−0.64, −0.34]	−0.04 (.09)	.657	[−0.21, 0.13]
South Korea	−0.50 (.07)	<.001	[−0.64, −0.36]	−0.01 (.09)	.956	[−0.17, 0.16]
Australia	−0.51 (.06)	<.001	[−0.62, −0.40]	−0.06 (.06)	.303	[−0.17, 0.05]
United States	−0.55 (.06)	<.001	[−0.66, −0.44]	−0.05 (.06)	.401	[−0.16, 0.06]
Germany	−0.55 (.06)	<.001	[−0.67, −0.44]	−0.02 (.06)	.687	[−0.13, 0.09]
China	−0.56 (.06)	<.001	[−0.67, −0.45]	−0.07 (.06)	.226	[−0.18, 0.04]
Turkey	−0.64 (.08)	<.001	[−0.79, −0.48]	−0.10 (.08)	.233	[−0.25, 0.06]
South Africa	−0.65 (.08)	<.001	[−0.80, −0.50]	−0.10 (.07)	.134	[−0.24, 0.03]
Poland	−0.80 (.08)	<.001	[−0.95, −0.64]	−0.22 (.08)	.006	[−0.37, −0.06]
Russia	−1.30 (.08)	<.001	[−1.45, −1.14]	−0.44 (.08)	<.001	[−0.59, −0.28]
Hungary	−1.31 (.08)	<.001	[−1.46, −1.17]	−0.23 (.09)	.008	[−0.40, −0.06]

Note. Mean difference is positivity toward gay men minus positivity toward lesbian women.

compared to those Brazil, China, Hungary, Japan, Peru, Poland, Russia, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey ( $ps < .021$ ); and similar attitudes to those in France, Germany, Italy, and Mexico ( $ps > .243$ ).

Turning to our focal hypotheses, overall results showed a significant difference in attitudes as a function of target gender,  $F(1, 16,711) = 791.45, p < .001, \eta^2 = .045$ , and of participant gender,  $F(1, 16,711) = 206.47, p < .001, \eta^2 = .012$ , which was qualified by an interaction between these two variables,  $F(1, 16,711) = 444.94, p < .001, \eta^2 = .026$ . Across all countries, men (vs. women) hold more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities, and this is especially true for attitudes regarding gay men ( $M_{men} = 4.78, SD_{men} = 2.28$  vs.  $M_{women} = 5.47, SD_{women} = 2.21$ ) as compared to lesbian women ( $M_{men} = 5.25, SD_{men} = 2.07$  vs.  $M_{women} = 5.52, SD_{women} = 2.18$ ). These results were qualified by significant interactions with country ( $ps < .001$ ).

Pairwise comparisons of attitudes toward gay men versus lesbian women showed that, in all countries, gay men are rated more negatively than lesbian women. The mean differences ranged from  $|M_{diff}| = .11, SE = .05, p = .045, 95\% CI_{meandiff} = [−0.21, −0.00]$  (in India) to  $|M_{diff}| = .87, SE = .06, p < .001, 95\% CI_{meandiff} = [−0.98, −0.76]$  (in Russia). This was especially driven by male participants. As reported in Table 2, in all countries, men reported significantly more negative attitudes toward gay men (vs. lesbian women). Women's attitudes did not differ as a function of target gender,

except in Poland, Hungary, and Russia (where they were also more negative toward men vs. women). Notably, there was no country where men or women reported more negative attitudes toward lesbian women compared to gay men.

Next, we examine the associations of gender and endorsement of gender norms with attitudes. We conducted two multi-level models (MLMs), with respondents nested within countries, predicting attitudes towards (1) gay men and (2) lesbian women with participant gender and endorsement of traditional gender norms as individual variables, adjusting for demographic variables (age, income, education, and religiosity) on the individual level and LGB rights (mean-centered) on the country level. In both models, we allowed for random variation on each country's intercept and on the slopes for gender and gender norms (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). Results are listed in Table 3.

As can be seen in the table, above and beyond individual- and country-level differences, participant gender was significantly related to attitudes toward gay men (with women reporting more positive attitudes compared to men), but it was unrelated to attitudes toward lesbian women. As predicted, results revealed a negative, significant association between endorsing gender norms and attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. Results also showed that the relationship between country-level LGB rights and attitudes toward gay men (but not lesbian women) was qualified by participant gender. Analyses of the simple slopes showed that the association between LGB

**Table 3.** Estimates from Multilevel Model with Random Intercept and Slope Predicting Positive Attitudes.

	Gay Men			Lesbian Women		
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>	95% CI <sub><i>b</i></sub>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>	95% CI <sub><i>b</i></sub>
Fixed effects						
Person-level variables						
Intercept	4.83 (.13)	<.001	[4.56, 5.10]	5.31 (.09)	<.001	[5.13, 5.50]
Female	0.40 (.04)	<.001	[0.32, 0.48]	0.02 (.05)	.705	[-0.09, 0.13]
Age	-0.02 (.00)	<.001	[-0.02, -0.02]	-0.02 (.00)	<.001	[-0.02, -0.02]
Education	0.12 (.02)	<.001	[0.07, 0.17]	0.08 (.02)	.001	[0.03, 0.13]
Income	0.02 (.03)	.524	[-0.03, 0.07]	0.03 (.03)	.191	[-0.02, 0.08]
Religiosity	-0.12 (.02)	<.001	[-0.15, -0.09]	-0.16 (.01)	<.001	[-0.19, -0.13]
Gender norms	-0.30 (.04)	<.001	[-0.40, -0.21]	-0.24 (.04)	<.001	[-0.33, -0.16]
Country-level variables						
LGB rights	2.35 (.51)	<.001	[1.28, 3.42]	1.94 (.35)	<.001	[1.21, 2.66]
Cross-level interactions						
LGB Rights × Female	-0.65 (.15)	<.001	[-0.97, -0.33]	-0.32 (.21)	.138	[-0.66, -0.15]
LGB Rights × Gender Norms	-0.30 (.17)	.099	[-0.66, 0.06]	-0.29 (.16)	.081	[-0.61, 0.04]
Random effects						
Residual	4.12 (.05)	<.001	[4.03, 4.22]	3.83 (.04)	<.001	[3.74, 3.91]
Intercept	0.38 (.12)	.002	[0.20, 0.70]	0.17 (.06)	.003	[0.09, 0.32]
Female	0.01 (.01)	.476	[0.00, 0.12]	0.04 (.02)	.052	[0.01, 0.10]
Gender norms	0.04 (.01)	.003	[0.02, 0.08]	0.03 (.01)	.003	[0.02, 0.06]
Cov (female, intercept)	-0.00 (.03)	.941	[-0.06, 0.05]	0.04 (.02)	.069	[-0.00, 0.09]
Cov (gender norms, intercept)	0.07 (.03)	.041	[0.00, 0.13]	0.03 (.02)	.093	[-0.01, 0.07]
Cov (gender norms, female)	0.01 (.01)	.168	[-0.01, 0.03]	0.02 (.01)	.065	[-0.00, 0.05]

Note. Cov = covariance.

rights and attitudes was stronger for men,  $b = 2.35$ ,  $SE = .51$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI<sub>*b*</sub> = [1.28, 3.42], than for women,  $b = 1.70$ ,  $SE = .51$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95% CI<sub>*b*</sub> = [0.63, 2.77].

Looking at the random effects (at the bottom of Table 3), there was significant variability in levels of positivity across country (i.e., among the model intercepts), and in the relationship between gender norms and attitudes, but not in the relationship between participant gender and attitudes. Further, for gay men, there was a positive association between the intercept and slope, indicating that the relationship between gender norm endorsement and attitudes is stronger in more prejudiced countries.

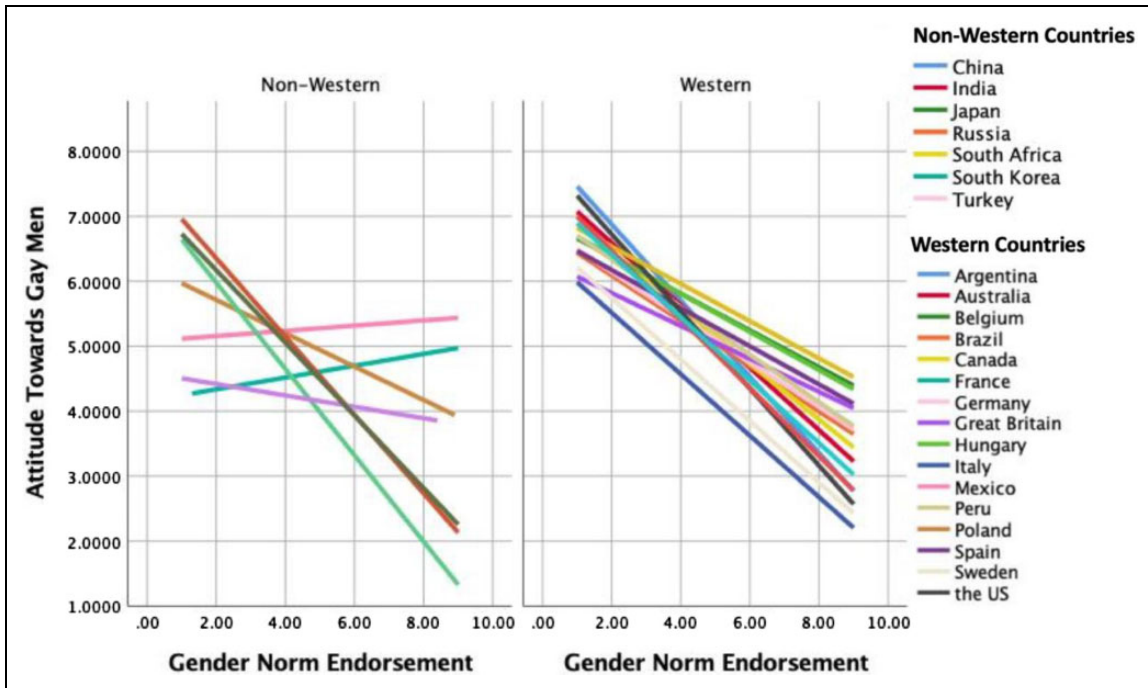
Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the slopes for each country for gay men and lesbian women, respectively. As can be seen, among Western countries, there is a clear pattern such that gender norm importance is negatively related to pro-gay attitudes. In non-Western countries, however, there is much more variability.

To estimate the relationship in each country, we conducted fixed-effects MLMs, gender and gender norm endorsement predicting attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women, adjusting for the other demographic variables. These models included dummy codes for country and the interactions between country and both gender and gender norm endorsement. We varied the reference group to estimate the simple slope for each country. The simple slopes for each country are listed in Table 4.

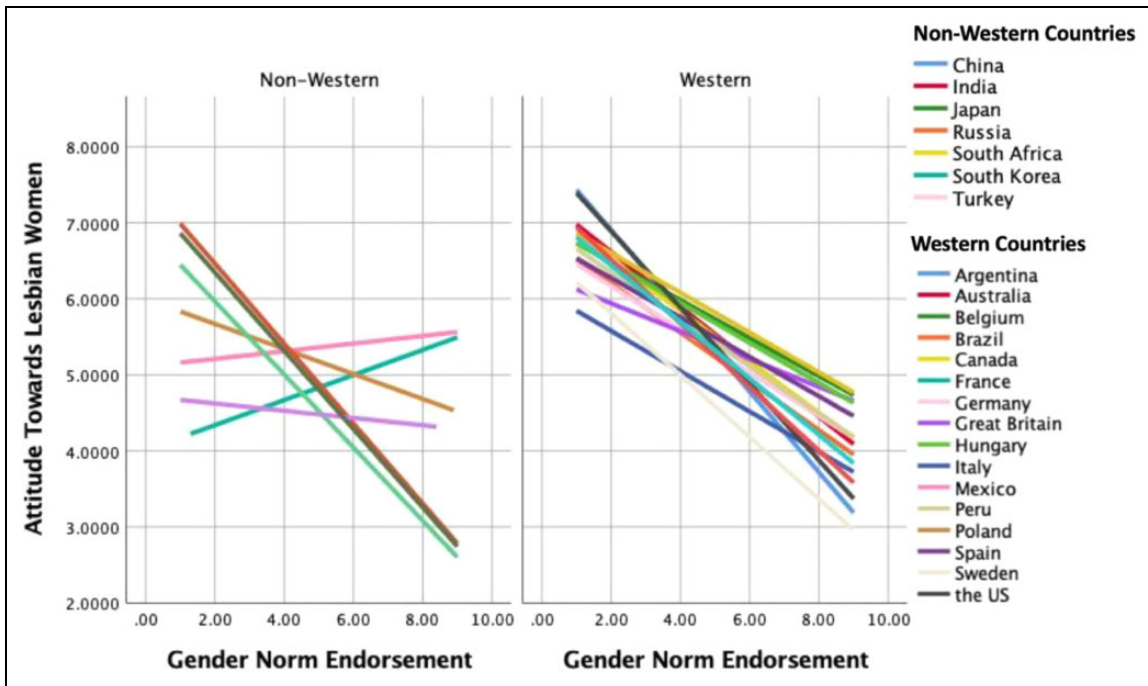
The relationship between gender norm endorsement and attitudes was remarkably consistent in Western countries but less so in non-Western countries. As seen in Table 4, gender

norm endorsement was significantly and positively associated with attitudes toward both gay men and lesbian women in all of the Western countries in the survey. Of the non-Western countries, data from Russia, South Africa, and Turkey showed similar patterns to the Western countries, such that there were significant, negative associations between gender norm endorsement and pro-gay attitudes, for both male and female targets. In Japan, gender norm endorsement was negatively related to attitudes toward gay men but unrelated to attitudes toward lesbian women. In China and India, the opposite pattern emerged—gender norm endorsement was positively related to positive attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women. In South Korea, there were no reliable relationships between gender norm endorsement and attitudes.

Looking next at the relationship between participant gender and attitudes, results were fairly inconsistent across countries. After adjusting for gender norm endorsement, women (vs. men) reported more positive attitudes toward gay men in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Peru, Poland, and Sweden, but there were no gender differences in Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Great Britain, Mexico, Spain, and United States. In non-Western countries, results were more consistent: Women (vs. men) were more positive toward gay men in China, India, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, and Japan; there were no gender difference in South Africa. Participant gender is unrelated to attitudes toward lesbian women in most places. The exceptions are that in China, France, and Italy, women (vs. men) were more positive toward lesbian women, whereas in Mexico and the United States, women (vs. men) were more negative.



**Figure 1.** The association between gender norm endorsement and positive attitudes toward gay men in non-Western (left) and Western (right) countries.



**Figure 2.** The association between gender norm endorsement and positive attitudes toward lesbian women in non-Western (left) and Western (right) countries.

**General Discussion**

Analyses of the associations between gender and gender norm endorsement with attitudes toward gay men and lesbian women in 23 nations revealed many similarities across countries but

also some interesting differences, especially between Western and non-Western countries. First, we found that gay men are disliked more than lesbian women in every country we tested. This reflects previous research findings from the United States

**Table 4.** Simple Slopes of Participant Gender and Gender Norm Endorsement Predicting Positive Attitudes.

Country		Gay Men			Lesbian Women		
		<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>	95% CI <sub><i>b</i></sub>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>p</i>	95% CI <sub><i>b</i></sub>
Western countries							
Argentina	Female	.10 (.21)	.624	[-.31, .40]	.08 (.20)	.679	[-.03, .48]
	Gender norms	-.56 (.05)	<.001	[-.67, -.46]	-.50 (.05)	<.001	[-.60, -.41]
Australia	Female	.43 (.15)	.003	[.15, .70]	.07 (.14)	.637	[-.21, .33]
	Gender norms	-.44 (.04)	<.001	[-.51, -.36]	-.31 (.04)	<.001	[-.38, -.28]
Belgium	Female	.25 (.22)	.254	[-.18, .67]	-.05 (.21)	.819	[-.45, .36]
	Gender norms	-.26 (.07)	<.001	[-.38, -.13]	-.24 (.07)	<.001	[-.36, -.12]
Brazil	Female	.20 (.14)	.176	[-.09, .47]	-.16 (.14)	.261	[-.43, .12]
	Gender norms	-.31 (.04)	<.001	[-.37, -.24]	-.29 (.04)	<.001	[-.34, -.22]
Canada	Female	.29 (.15)	.050	[-.00, .57]	-.12 (.14)	.415	[-.39, .16]
	Gender norms	-.35 (.04)	<.001	[-.43, -.27]	-.27 (.04)	<.001	[-.35, -.19]
France	Female	.50 (.15)	<.001	[.23, .79]	.28 (.14)	.040	[.01, .55]
	Gender norms	-.24 (.04)	<.001	[-.32, -.16]	-.18 (.04)	<.001	[-.26, -.10]
Germany	Female	.37 (.15)	.011	[.09, .65]	-.15 (.14)	.268	[-.43, .12]
	Gender norms	-.22 (.05)	<.001	[-.31, -.14]	-.18 (.04)	<.001	[-.27, -.10]
Great Britain	Female	.25 (.14)	.080	[-.03, .52]	-.04 (.13)	.798	[-.30, .23]
	Gender norms	-.22 (.04)	<.001	[-.30, -.15]	-.20 (.04)	<.001	[-.27, -.13]
Hungary	Female	.70 (.20)	.001	[.20, 1.10]	-.32 (.20)	.101	[-.70, .06]
	Gender norms	-.42 (.07)	<.001	[-.55, -.28]	-.22 (.07)	.001	[-.35, -.09]
Italy	Female	.51 (.15)	.001	[.22, .80]	.31 (.14)	.029	[.03, .59]
	Gender norms	-.31 (.04)	<.001	[-.40, -.22]	-.23 (.04)	<.001	[-.31, -.15]
Mexico	Female	-.02 (.20)	.926	[-.40, .36]	-.37 (.19)	.044	[-.74, -.01]
	Gender norms	-.23 (.05)	<.001	[-.32, -.13]	-.19 (.05)	<.001	[-.29, -.10]
Peru	Female	.73 (.20)	<.001	[.24, 1.10]	.30 (.20)	.121	[-.08, .67]
	Gender norms	-.40 (.06)	<.001	[-.50, -.29]	-.35 (.06)	<.001	[-.46, -.24]
Poland	Female	.46 (.20)	.021	[.07, .86]	-.07 (.20)	.716	[-.45, .31]
	Gender norms	-.54 (.07)	<.001	[-.68, -.40]	-.45 (.07)	<.001	[-.69, -.32]
Spain	Female	.24 (.15)	.111	[-.05, .53]	.23 (.14)	.099	[-.44, .51]
	Gender norms	-.24 (.04)	<.001	[-.32, -.17]	-.21 (.04)	<.001	[-.29, -.14]
Sweden	Female	.55 (.21)	.007	[.15, .96]	.33 (.20)	.104	[-.07, .72]
	Gender norms	-.49 (.06)	<.001	[-.60, -.38]	-.40 (.06)	<.001	[-.50, -.72]
United States	Female	.05 (.14)	.731	[-.22, .32]	-.35 (.13)	.008	[-.61, -.09]
	Gender norms	-.43 (.04)	<.001	[-.50, -.36]	-.34 (.03)	<.001	[-.41, -.27]
Non-Western countries							
China	Female	.95 (.13)	<.001	[.70, 1.22]	.52 (.13)	<.001	[.27, .77]
	Gender norms	.25 (.06)	<.001	[.14, .36]	.30 (.05)	<.001	[.20, .41]
India	Female	.64 (.18)	<.001	[.28, .99]	.28 (.17)	.109	[-.06, .62]
	Gender norms	.15 (.05)	.003	[.05, .25]	.15 (.05)	.003	[.05, .24]
Russia	Female	.42 (.19)	.032	[.04, .79]	-.30 (.18)	.102	[-.66, .06]
	Gender norms	-.59 (.07)	<.001	[-.72, -.46]	-.44 (.06)	<.001	[-.57, -.32]
South Africa	Female	.22 (.18)	.215	[-.13, .56]	-.30 (.17)	.074	[-.63, .03]
	Gender norms	-.54 (.05)	<.001	[-.64, -.45]	-.49 (.05)	<.001	[-.58, -.40]
South Korea	Female	.84 (.20)	.001	[.45, 1.20]	.30 (.20)	.119	[-.08, .70]
	Gender norms	.08 (.06)	.172	[-.04, .20]	.07 (.06)	.204	[-.04, .18]
Turkey	Female	.56 (.20)	.004	[.19, .94]	.04 (.19)	.849	[-.33, .40]
	Gender norms	-.48 (.05)	<.001	[-.58, -.38]	-.46 (.05)	<.001	[-.56, -.36]
Japan	Female	.49 (.14)	.001	[.18, .72]	.19 (.13)	.163	[-.08, .45]
	Gender norms	-.13 (.06)	.028	[-.24, -.02]	-.07 (.06)	.191	[-.18, .04]

(e.g., Herek, 2000). It also supports the idea that in patriarchal societies, women are largely invisible in the public sphere (Perez, 2019), especially with regard to their sexuality (Guth, 1978; Lambie, 2009). Whether or not the degree of androcentrism or male dominance in a society could account for these mean differences in attitudes between lesbian women versus gay men is an interesting question for future research.

Previous research consistently found that men, relative to women, hold more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities (Herek, 2002). In our analyses, however, the association between gender and sexual prejudice was rather inconsistent. Overall, men (vs. women) reported more negative attitudes toward gay men, but there was no relationship between gender and attitudes toward lesbian women. Looking at this within



each country, we found that in several countries (including the United States), men and women did not significantly differ in their attitudes toward gay men. Only in China, France, and Italy did men (vs. women) report more negative attitudes toward lesbian women. In Mexico and the United States, women were significantly *more* prejudiced than men on the evaluations of lesbian women.

We also found that the relationship between gender and sexual prejudice systematically varied as a function of nation-level rights for sexual minorities. Specifically, people's attitudes reflected the societal context, such that prejudice was higher in countries with low (vs. high) levels of protection for sexual minorities, which is in line with the idea that "cultural heterosexism" sets the stage for sexual prejudice (Herek, 2007). However, we found that this is especially true for men—that is, men's attitudes (vs. women's) are more strongly correlated with national-level rights. Although we did not predict this finding, it is in line with previous research on system justification theory, showing that men's (vs. women's) attitudes and beliefs tend to be more affected by societal norms (e.g., Day, Kay, Holmes, & Napier, 2011). This suggests that the culture of heterosexism may be a better explanatory framework for men (vs. women). An interesting line of inquiry for future research is to examine whether (and how) societal-level factors may differentially influence sexual prejudice for men versus women.

The endorsement of gender norms was significantly associated with attitudes toward sexual minorities in every Western country, and this was true for attitudes toward both gay men and lesbian women. Thus, this relationship is remarkably consistent across Western societies. It was also found in Russia, South Africa, and Turkey for both gay men and lesbian women, and, to a lesser extent, in Japan for gay men (but not lesbian women). In South Korea, endorsement of gender norms was unrelated to attitudes toward sexual minorities; in China and India, endorsement of gender norms was *positively* related to pro-gay attitudes.

Taken together, the results show that the connection between gender norms and sexuality-related attitudes exists across myriad cultures and is unlikely to be a product of a particular religion or cultural orientation. It is notable, too, that the strength of this association did not reliably vary as a function of nation-level tolerance (as measured by LGB rights). Thus, the connection between gender norm enforcement and sexual prejudice appears to be orthogonal to the level of tolerance in a society.

We also found that gender norms and sexuality are not associated in the same way in India and Southeast Asia (e.g., China, Japan, South Korea) compared to other countries. This is not to say that these nations are free from gender differentiation. As our data show, the endorsement of gender norms in these countries is relatively high, especially in China and India (only Russia is higher). It does suggest, though, that notions of gender may be more divorced from notions about sexual orientation. There are some reasons to expect that might be the case in India. For instance, in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh, there is official recognition of a third gender—*khawaja sara*,

also referred to as *hijras* (more derogatory)—which are individuals who are typically born male or intersex and who present as feminine. They are not considered homosexual, nor are they considered male or female, and thus defy Western taxonomies of sexuality and gender.

How people interpret gender norms or gender nonconformity in Southeast Asian countries is more difficult to explain. There has been much media coverage about rising femininity in beauty standards for men in Korean popular culture (Maliangkay, 2010). The "pretty boy" ideal, referred to as *khonminnam* (a combination of words for "flower" and "beautiful man"), has become a global sensation, but this is especially true in China, Singapore, Thailand, and Japan (BBC News, 2018; Maliangkay, 2010). Of course, this is very much speculative, but it is conceivable that these hyper-gendered but asexual characters contributed to people's rejection of Western masculinity ideals.

None of these explanations, however, can address why gender norm endorsement would be *positively* related to pro-gay attitudes, as we found in India and China. India and China are notable because both countries are undergoing fast-paced economic and political modernization, and thus, it is conceivable that people's attitudes are being affected by their perceptions of what is normative in other modernized societies, like the United States and Europe. It could be, for instance, that both gender norms and nonheterosexuality are considered "Western" (or, perhaps, capitalist) concepts, and those who are pro-Western are more likely to feel favorable toward both. Of course, much more research is needed to fully understand what underlies these effects in different contexts.

One nuance to point out is that, in our study, we examined endorsement of gender *norms*—that is, gender differentiation in men and women's behavior and styles—and this may have different associations with sexual prejudice than other gender-related beliefs, like endorsement of hierarchical gender *arrangements*. As an example, one study conducted in the United States in the 1970s found that endorsement of gender norms (referred to as "traditional masculine–feminine distinctions") was significantly associated with sexual prejudice among both men and women, but beliefs about equality between the sexes was not (Weinberger & Milham, 1979). In contrast, a more recent study conducted in three southeast Asian cities found that traditional attitudes toward gender *roles* (e.g., "woman should follow her husband no matter what his lot") was associated with sexual prejudice for both men and women in Shanghai and Taipei, and for men (but not women) in Hanoi (Feng et al., 2012). While more work is needed to systematically test this, it could be the case that the motivations for sexual prejudice differ depending on the context. For instance, in more collectivist cultures, people might be more concerned about preserving gender *roles*, whereas in individualist cultures, people might be more concerned about preserved gendered identities. One indirect piece of evidence in line with this comes from some cross-cultural work on personality, which found that stereotypical gender differences in people's self-reported personality traits are larger in Western, more

individualistic countries (including North America and Western Europe) compared to more collectivist countries (including South and Southeast Asia and southern Africa), despite the fact that participants residing in individualistic (vs. collectivist) nations held more progressive views about gender equality (Costa, Terracciano, & McCrae, 2001).

All of these open questions notwithstanding, this research uncovers an important phenomenon, namely, that the well-known association between gender norm enforcement and sexual prejudice does not generalize in many non-Western contexts, and indeed, the opposite pattern is found in India and China—which, together, include over 36% of the world's population. This work should be a springboard for more focused inquiries into conceptualizations of gender and sexuality in understudied populations and to rethink how these things are conceptualized in the Western world.


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### Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

### Note

1. In addition to the measures reported here, the larger survey included measures on (1) self-construal, (2) attitudes toward other groups (e.g., transgender men and women, unmarried people), (3) beliefs about sexual minorities and transpeople (e.g., Is it a sin, mental illness), (4) sexism, (5) political ideology, and (6) subjective well-being.

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