



Homonegativity among first and second generation migrants in Europe: The interplay of time trends, origin, destination and religion



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ABSTRACT

Previous studies reported declining disapproval of homosexuality in Europe but have simultaneously identified the decelerating effect of religiosity and the higher disapproval of homosexuality among migrants. In this paper, we address disapproval of homosexuality among first- and second-generation migrants in Europe by assessing (1) period and cohort changes, (2) origin and destination country influences and (3) the role of religiosity. We develop a specific cross-classified multilevel design enabling us to simultaneously examine these influences. We test hypotheses using a subsample of the European Social Survey (ESS), containing 19,878 first and second generation migrants. The analyses lead to three important conclusions. Firstly, disapproval of homosexuality is declining both over time and across cohorts. Secondly, migrants conform to levels of disapproval of homosexuality among natives in the destination country, and this explains the decline among migrants over time. Thirdly, religion has a multi-faceted influence on levels of disapproval of homosexuality among migrants.

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1. Introduction

Concerns in European countries about differences in attitudes between first and second generation migrants on the one hand and non-migrants on the other hand arise in the public media. Especially non-European and often Muslim migrants are considered to have conservative attitudes towards controversial subjects in the personal domain, such as homosexuality. A populist statement in the public debate is the presupposition that Muslims have failed to integrate in the European society because Islamic and Western cultures are irreconcilable (Lucassen, 2005). This difference is also reflected in academic research, with specific attention being devoted to the difference between Muslim migrants and natives (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2012; Teney and Subramanian, 2010). Scholars have in most cases only studied baseline differences between migrants and non-migrants, thus neglecting the complex interplay of processes influencing migrants and the difference between both. Therefore, the literature is in need of a thorough study of attitudes towards homosexuality among first and second generation migrants in Europe. In this paper we examine disapproval of homosexuality among first and second generation migrants, while focusing on three important aspects: changes over time, origin and destination context effects and religiosity.

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A first important aspect which has been overlooked, is possible time trends in disapproval of homosexuality among migrants. During the last decades, a prolonged decline in disapproval of homosexuality has been observed, in Europe and other industrialized nations (Loftus, 2001; Treas, 2002). The apparent decline in disapproval of homosexuality among natives in Western countries, might, however, not be a simple change in attitudes over time among all individuals, but seems to be largely attributable to cohort replacement (Inglehart, 2008; Jaspers et al., 2007; Meeusen and Hooghe, 2012; Van de Meerendonk and Scheepers, 2004). People growing up in different cohorts, tend to have different opinions due to the socialization context (Inglehart, 1989). When it comes to disapproval of homosexuality, older cohorts are, in general, more negative towards homosexuality than younger cohorts (Inglehart, 1989). As time goes by, younger cohorts come to age, thus changing the composition of the population and hence lowering general levels of disapproval of homosexuality (Loftus, 2001). Cohort socialization is often examined as an explanation of levels of homosexuality among natives, but not among migrants. As already indicated, the inertia of attitudes on homosexuality among migrants has not been put to the test: scholars only report higher levels of disapproval among migrants, assuming these levels are static.

Second, the location of socialization can have an important aspect on attitudes as well, apart from the period. There is a large variation in levels of disapproval of homosexuality throughout the world and consequently gay rights (Inglehart, 1989). There is considerable variation in Europe as well, with Northern and Western European countries often reporting very low levels and Southern and Eastern European countries reporting somewhat higher levels (Štulhofer and Rimac, 2009; van den Akker et al., 2013). At the time of writing, an increasing number of countries have legalized, or are in the process of legalizing, same-sex marriages, while other countries maintain and enforce legislation punishing homosexual relations and/or acts with severe sanctions, including the death penalty in some countries. Hence, growing up in a tolerant or non-tolerant country could have an important impact on an individual's stance towards homosexuality. Apart from this contextual effect of the origin country, the destination country can exert an important influence on migrants' attitudes on homosexuality as well. Previous research has demonstrated that migrants often conform to the behavior and attitudes of natives (Maxwell, 2010). Therefore, disapproval of homosexuality among migrants needs to be grasped within this complex interplay of origin and destination influences.

A third aspect which has been underdeveloped in the research into disapproval of homosexuality among migrants, is the role of religiosity. Both belonging to a certain denomination and adhering to religious practices, has repeatedly been found as having an increasing effect on disapproval of homosexuality (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2012; Jaspers et al., 2007; Loftus, 2001; Treas, 2002; van den Akker et al., 2013). Given the higher levels of religiosity among migrants in Europe compared to natives, religion is often mentioned as a possible explanation of homophobia (Hooghe and Meeusen, 2012). Both individual and contextual religiosity affect moral beliefs about sexuality (Finke and Adamczyk, 2008). However, as with disapproval of homosexuality, religiosity itself is influenced by socialization cohorts (Kelley and De Graaf, 1997) and, for migrants, with origin and destination country effects (Van der Bracht et al., 2014; Van Tubergen, 2006). Moreover, religiosity and disapproval of homosexuality are only parts of a wider range of human values which are formed during socialization. Therefore, the effect of religiosity on migrants' disapproval of homosexuality needs to be framed in a broader analysis of the transmission of human values and against the background of socialization within birth cohorts, influenced by aspects of the origin and destination countries.

In this paper, we examine time trends, origin and destination effects and the influence of religiosity. We develop a specific cross-classified multilevel design which enables us to simultaneously model changes over time, as a product of period and cohort changes, as well as assessing influences of origin and destination countries. We apply this specific design to 19,878 first and second generation migrants living in 27 European countries, using four different waves (2–5; 2004–2010) of the European Social Survey (ESS).

2. Theory

2.1. Trends over time

Similar to other attitudes regarding controversial subjects in the personal sphere, such as euthanasia (Jaspers et al., 2007) and sexual intercourse outside marriage (Treas, 2002), studies have reported a prolonged decline in disapproval of homosexuality over the last decades, in Europe (Van de Meerendonk and Scheepers, 2004), as well as in other Western countries (Inglehart, 1989). These changes in attitudes over time are, however, more complex than might seem at first glance. Declines might not be general among the whole population, but rather a product of the aging of younger birth cohorts. According to Inglehart (1977), large-scale value changes in Western societies are caused by a shift from an emphasis on material well-being toward an emphasis on the quality of life, due to an improvement in living conditions. As living conditions improve, less time needs to be devoted to satisfying basic needs such as food or economic security, and there is more time to spend on forms of self-expression and individual autonomy (Inglehart, 2008). One of the central arguments of this post-materialism theory is that value changes come with generational changes, stating that basic values are formed according to the conditions experienced during the socialization period (Inglehart, 2008). Indeed, when it comes to disapproval of homosexuality, or other attitudes on controversial subjects in the personal sphere, the apparent decline over time is actually a product of intergenerational changes (Jaspers et al., 2007; Loftus, 2001; Treas, 2002; Van de Meerendonk and Scheepers, 2004).

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