

## Sexual Minorities, Civil Rights, and Romanians' Resistance to Social Change

**Viviana ANDREESCU**  
*University of Louisville*  
[viviana.andrescu@louisville.edu](mailto:viviana.andrescu@louisville.edu)

**Abstract:** Using as a data source the 2015 Special Eurobarometer, the present analysis tries to identify the individual-level factors more likely to predict the Romanians' opposition to equal rights for sexual minorities (including marriage equality rights). Although more than half of the Romanians tend to oppose equal rights for LGBT persons and seven out of ten respondents do not favor the legalization of same-sex marriage throughout Europe, as prior research has shown, the social context, as well as personal characteristics and life experiences, influence significantly variations in Romanians' attitudes regarding LGBT rights. Specifically, findings indicate that heterosexist attitudes are more likely to be expressed by individuals who belong to minority religious groups, such as Catholics and adherents to Christian denominations other than the Orthodox Church, persons over 55 years old, those who regard themselves as being part of the working/low-middle classes, residents of South Muntenia and the South East, and persons who do not have access to or do not use modern communication systems. Conversely, support for LGBT rights is higher among those who acknowledge interpersonal contacts with LGBT persons, have higher levels of social acceptance of sexual and gender minorities in various spheres of the public life and in the family, and identify with the European Union's norms and values.

**Keywords:** LGBT rights, sexual minorities, sexual prejudice, heterosexism, same-sex marriage, Romania.

### Introduction

Almost two decades have passed since the Romanian legislators enacted in 2001 the decriminalization of same-sex relationships in Romania. Starting with 2000, several laws and policies focusing on sexual minorities' rights have been implemented in Romania. As indicated by



a recent report of the *International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association* (ILGA), Romania is part of a minority of UN states (37%) where discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation is forbidden by the law (see Articles 5-8 of the 2000 Anti-Discrimination Law). Additionally, Articles 10-16 of the Anti-Discrimination Law prohibit discriminatory practices in housing, education, access to health care and other services on the grounds of sexual orientation. Although there is no legislative provision prohibiting incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation, Romania is also part of the small group of countries (23% of UN states) that acknowledge in their legislation that a homophobic motive is an aggravating factor in the commission of a violent crime (see Article 77 of the 2006 Penal Code). Currently, there are no ‘propaganda’ and/or ‘morality’ laws that target freedom of expression related to sexual orientation and legal barriers to the formation, establishment, or registration of sexual orientation-related NGOs have not been detected in Romania (Carroll and Mendos 2017).

Nonetheless, Romania is one the six EU member states that do not offer any legal protection to same-sex couples because civil unions and/or same-sex marriages are not recognized by the Romanian law. Romanian legislation also lacks provisions regarding the recognition of joint adoption by same-sex couples or second parent adoption rights (Carroll and Mendos 2017). In fact, the Romanian Civil Code has been amended (Article 277) in 2009 and marriage has been redefined to clearly ban same-sex marriages. While at the time of this writing, the public debate regarding the organization of a referendum about the redefinition of the family in the Constitution (as a consensual union between a man and a woman) continues, in March 2018, the National Anti-Discrimination Council (CNCD) proposed a bill, which if approved by the Parliament, would grant legal recognition to civil partnerships. However, Article 14 of the proposed bill stipulates that same-sex partners that enter a civil union do not have any adoption rights (CNCD 2018).

In sum, for the most part, the legislative changes meant to protect and promote equal social and civil rights for sexual minorities in Romania occurred prior to the country’s accession to the European Union in 2007. It can be argued that Romania’s adoption of equal-rights legislation was mainly a result of strong international pressure and the European Union’s accession requirements (see Andreescu 2011; Nachescu 2005) and not because the country internalized the EU norms concerning LGBT persons. The limited number of 2013-2017 legislative attempts to recognize and protect same-sex couples, such as civil union or registered partnership legislation, failed and the Coalition for Family’s initiatives to undermine sexual minorities’ marriage rights seemed to be

more successful in attracting many supporters. Organized in 2015, the Coalition for Family is a “civic initiative” that currently includes 37 NGOs (Gheorghiu 2018). The highly conservative coalition portrayed same-sex partnerships as a threat to traditional family values and gathered almost three million signatures on a petition to introduce a constitutional amendment that would change the current gender-neutral definition of marriage. Consequently, in 2016, the Romanian Constitutional Court (CCR) validated the proposal. Additionally, the “Constitutional Court ruled that a popular vote on the issue could take place, despite concerns from international [and local] NGOs that the proposed amendment would violate human rights” (ILGA-Europe 2017, 190).

Regardless of anti-discrimination legislation, an increased visibility of the Romanian LGBT community, the LGBT activists’ campaigns and various actions meant to improve the lives and the social acceptance of sexual minorities across the country (see Viski 2015; Viski and Nachescu 2017), and despite the public statement of solidarity with the LGBT community made by Romania’s President in October 2016 (ILGA-Europe 2017), a large segment of the Romanian population continues to display hostility toward sexual minorities and a relatively high level of sexual prejudice. If in 2006, 46.4% of the Romanians age 15 and over, did not think, “gay men and lesbians should be free to live their own life as they wish” (Andreescu 2011, 219), in 2012, 53% of the respondents to a survey conducted on a nationally representative sample noted that homosexuality should be outlawed. In addition, 79.4% of the study participants declared they would not wish to have as a neighbor a homosexual person (IRESCOP 2012). Yet, even if only 34% of the respondents participating to a more recent national survey conducted by ILGA noted they would be comfortable socializing with people who are openly attracted to persons of the same sex, more than half (52%) of the interviewees (N= 1,154) considered that “equal rights and protections should be applied to everyone, including people who are romantically and sexually attracted to people of the same sex” (ILGA 2017, 370-375).

Based on a systematic analysis of the six waves of the World Values Survey (WVS), political scientists Inglehart and Welzel (2010) identified two major dimensions of the cultural variation in human values across countries of the world. One of this dimension is a continuum from traditional values to secular-rational values, while the second dimension refers to materialist (survival) values vs. post-materialist (self-expression) values. In traditional societies, citizens are more likely to emphasize the importance of religion, respect for authority, and traditional family values. Secular-rational values represent the opposite. When survival values are dominant, citizens

tend to value economic and physical security, are more likely to share ethnocentric values, and have low levels of societal and interpersonal trust and tolerance of the outgroup members. On the other hand, in post-materialist societies, citizens prioritize environmental protection, are more accepting of immigrants, favor gender equality and equal rights for sexual minorities, and want to participate actively in the political and economic decision-making processes (see Inglehart and Baker 2000; Held et al. 2009).

The diachronic cultural maps created by Inglehart and Welzel based on data collected from representative samples of residents in 97 countries representing 90% of the world population show how Romanians' cultural values changed over time. If in the early 1980s, Romania was among the countries predominantly characterized by secular-rational values, gradually, over the following three decades, Romanians' human values became more traditional. Conversely, while in 1981, Romania was part of the group of countries characterized by extreme survival values, when the sixth wave of WVS was conducted (2010-2014), Romanians moved closer to countries where citizens were more likely to emphasize self-expression values. Nonetheless, even if Romanians' scores were not extreme on any of the two dimensions, the country is a cultural neighbor of states whose residents are more likely to share traditional values and emphasize economic and physical security (World Values Survey n. d.).

In light of this profile, Romanians' reluctance to support equal civil rights for sexual and gender minorities is not surprising. Nonetheless, like in any country, Romanians' opinions regarding equal rights for social minorities vary among social groups. The present study intends to identify the individual-level factors more likely to differentiate persons who oppose LGBT equal rights from those who do not express such opposition. Additionally, the study intends to identify any potential changes that occurred in the determinants of Romanians' attitudes toward LGBT rights during the past decade (see Andreescu 2011). While in recent years, several studies and reports focusing on public attitudes toward sexual minorities and their civil rights in Europe and elsewhere have been published, quantitative research focusing exclusively on the correlates of Romanians' opinions about sexual and gender minorities' rights is sparse. Although limited in scope, this research intends to reduce this gap in the literature and to provide a better understanding of the circumstances that shape the Romanians' attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities in the country. Moreover, the intention is to provide information LGBT activists, as well as policy

makers interested in advancing equality rights for sexual and gender minorities in Romania, could use in their future endeavors meant to increase the public support for LGBT civil rights.

### **Explaining variations in public attitudes toward sexual minorities**

Although in a significant number of countries sexual minorities continue to be discriminated by the law, public opinion polls, as well as recent legislative changes that safeguard sexual minorities' civil and social rights suggest that worldwide the level of hostility toward individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or transsexual is decreasing. In fact, the authors of a recent report produced by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) noted that the "world is surprisingly more accepting than one might have imagined." Based on survey data collected from 116,000 respondents in 75 countries, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, the findings indicate that despite the anti-LGBT messages of religious and conservative political leaders, "a majority of people feel they can be respectful of their religion and culture and be accepting of sexual and gender diversity" (Carroll and Robotham 2017, 6). Nonetheless, attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities vary among countries and among individuals. Macro and micro-level studies conducted during the past decades identified several factors that explain variations in public attitudes toward sexual minorities and LGBT rights. This section of the paper will present some of them.

As Ayoub (2016, 137) noted, churches, the original global institutions, regard "international norms of homosexuality as threatening to important moral values." Unsurprisingly, research consistently documented a positive relationship between religiosity (e.g., the importance of religion in one's life; church attendance) and sexual prejudice (Ayoub 2016; Herek 1991; Norton and Herek 2013). Spina (2016) found that independent of one's involvement in religious activities, Romanians with a high level of confidence in the authority of the Orthodox Church were significantly less likely to consider homosexuality justified. Additionally, other research studies acknowledged that religious individuals were more likely to oppose LGBT rights, in general (Andreescu 2011; Swank and Raiz 2010; Takács and Szalma 2011) and same-sex marriage, in particular (Becker 2012; Brumbaugh et al. 2008; Dion and Diez 2017; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008; Jakobsson, Kotsadam, and Jakobsson 2013; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Pearl and Galupo 2007; Schwartz 2010; Woodford et al. 2012).

With few exceptions (see West 2018), research generally identified a link between the religious denomination individuals belong to and their attitudes toward sexual minorities and LGBT rights. Using the last three waves of the World Values Survey (WVS) Adamczyk (2017, 18-19) tried to determine how major religions and their followers view homosexuality. The author concluded that Protestants and Muslims, followed by Hindus are the most conservative religious groups in the world. Conversely, Jews and people with no religious affiliation express the lowest levels of disapproval of homosexuality.

Studies conducted in United States generally found that persons belonging to conservative Neo-Protestant denominations are more likely to oppose LGBT rights in general (Wood and Bartkowski 2004), and marriage rights, in particular (Becker 2012; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2008; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison 2006; Whitehead 2010). In post-socialist societies, however, the Catholic and Orthodox Churches have been particularly opposed to the import of EU norms regarding sexual minorities' equal rights (Ramet 2006, 126, cited in Ayoub 2016, 137). Yet, in both new and old EU countries, when compared to people belonging to other religious denominations, respondents who acknowledged adherence to Catholic and Christian Orthodox churches expressed a significantly lower level of tolerance toward homosexuality (Ayoub 2016, 147). Additionally, Takács and Szalma's (2011) multilevel analysis conducted on samples from 26 EU countries showed that persons who belonged to a religious denomination were significantly less likely to support equal rights for sexual minorities than were atheists.

Nevertheless, people's perceptions and attitudes toward outgroup members are not solely shaped by their religious beliefs and/or their recognition of the church authority. As scholars have demonstrated, "modernity is an important predictor of value change" (Ayoub 2016, 139). In the globalized modern world, individuals are constantly exposed to multiple external norms and values, which may change their sense of morality and social justice, especially if developed democracies of the world are recognized as models to be followed. Ayoub (2016), for example, found that in both old and new EU states, individuals with a high degree of confidence in the EU have a significantly higher level of tolerance toward homosexuality than their counterparts who do not identify with EU norms and values. Similarly, Sloopmaeckers and Sircar's (2018) macro-level analysis showed that municipalities in Croatia with a higher proportion of Eurosceptic individuals (i.e., persons who voted against the country's accession to the European Union) were



significantly more likely to support the introduction of a constitutional definition of marriage, that would deny marriage equality rights to same-sex couples.

Moreover, past research found that individuals with a post-materialist value orientation (e.g., those who emphasize freedom of speech and giving people more say; favor progress toward a less impersonal and more humane society) are generally more accepting of homosexuality (Ayoub 2016). Additionally, a recent study that examined public views on homosexuality in Romania and Bulgaria found that in both countries, independent of one's religiosity, persons with a materialist value orientation (i.e., preference for security and conformity) were significantly less likely to show tolerance toward homosexuality when compared to persons with post-materialist values (Spina 2016). Similarly, Andreescu (2011) acknowledged that Romanians more likely to oppose equal rights for sexual minorities were persons with materialist and conventional values, who were rule followers, underscored the importance of traditions and customs, and wanted the government to be strong and to ensure safety.

Almost two decades ago, Swim, Ferguson, and Hyers (1999, 61) noted that prejudice against gays and lesbians is openly demonstrated when there are, for instance, legislative efforts to prevent the legal recognition of same-sex marriages. However, more covert forms of prejudice against gays and lesbians exist, as well. One such behavioral manifestation of covert prejudice toward members of social minority groups is known in the literature as *social distance* (see Bogardus 1925) or “the degree that individuals desire to associate” with members of the target group (Maurer and Keim 2018, 4). Among other reasons, according to Goffman (1963, cited in Swim et al. 1999, 62), people may wish to distance themselves from stigmatized individuals in order to avoid a “courtesy stigma” or being stigmatized themselves because of their association with outgroup members.

In addition to experimental studies that examined the relationship social distance - sexual prejudice (e.g., Maurer and Keim 2018; Swim et al., 1999) or studies focusing on the correlates of social distance toward sexual minorities (Gentry 1987; Herek 1991), in recent years, several multi-country surveys (e.g., WVS, Eurobarometer) included various social distance scales to assess the public's level of acceptance of sexual minorities (see also Carroll and Robotham 2017). Moreover, a limited number of studies tested the effects of perceived social distance on public attitudes toward gay rights. Using WVS data for the years 2011 to 2015, Carlo-Gonzales, McKallagat, and Whitten-

Woodring (2017) found that countries that had a higher percentage of people unwilling to have a homosexual as a neighbor were significantly less likely to support gay rights laws.

Informed by Allport's (1954) intergroup contact theory, which states that interpersonal contact with stigmatized outgroup members would diminish prejudice and biased perceptions of social minority groups, several research studies tested the applicability of Allport's hypothesis to sexual minorities. Research findings generally show that interpersonal contact with gay and lesbian individuals reduces sexual prejudice and/or is significantly and positively associated with support for LGBT rights (Barth, Overby, and Huffmon 2009; Barth and Parry 2009; Bartoş, Berger, and Hegarty 2014; Brewer 2008; Carroll and Robotham 2017; Garner 2013; Lewis 2011; Wood and Bartkovski 2004). Persons who acknowledged interpersonal relationships or prior contact with sexual minorities were also more likely to support same-sex marriage rights (Becker 2012; Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz 2014; Santona and Tognasso 2018; Swank and Raiz 2010). Using a large sample of American college students, Woodford et al. (2012), however, did not find that having LGBT friends or acquaintances significantly differentiated supporters of same-sex marriage from those who had neutral attitudes regarding equal marriage rights for same-sex couples. While contact with transgender individuals does not always attract support for transgender rights (Flores 2015), recent research conducted in United States (Norton and Herek 2013; Tadlock et al. 2017) and Hong Kong (King, Winter, and Webster 2009) found that contact with transgender persons significantly influenced positive attitudes about transgender individuals and transgender rights.

In addition to cultural norms and values, religious beliefs, and the relational context of social interaction with sexual/gender minorities, prior research identified several demographic factors that appear to shape the public's feelings about sexual minorities and/or their civil rights. As Adamczyk (2017) recently noted, these factors generally refer to age, gender, socioeconomic status, and marital status.

Although not in all countries older individuals have more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities (e.g., West and Cowell 2015), in general, research acknowledged a positive association between age and sexual prejudice (Ayoub 2016; Adamczyk 2017; Herek 2002a). Additionally, several studies found that opposition to LGBT rights increases with age (Hayes 1997; Takács and Szalma 2011) and that younger generations are more supportive of marriage equality rights than older generations are (Becker 2012; Brumbaugh et al. 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2005; Lewis and Gossett 2008; Olson et al. 2006; Schwartz 2010; West and Cowell 2015). A prior study



conducted in Romania on a representative sample also found that senior citizens are significantly more likely to oppose gay rights than are younger individuals (Andreescu 2011). Jakobsson et al. (2013), however, did not find that age significantly affects variations in public support for same-sex marriage in Sweden and Norway.

Empirical research generally found that women tend to have more liberal attitudes toward sexual minorities (see Adamczyk 2016, for a review), males having a higher level of sexual prejudice (Herek 2002a; Norton and Herek 2013; West and Cowell 2015). Similar to prior findings, several studies acknowledged that women tend to be more supportive of same-sex marriage rights than men are (Becker 2012; Brumbaugh et al. 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2005; Lannutti and Lachlan 2007; Lewis and Gossett 2008; Moskowitz, Rieger and Roloff 2010; Olson et al. 2006; Pearl and Galupo 2007). Although Herek (2002b) also found that compared to men, women expressed a significantly higher level of support for gay rights, the author noted that heterosexual men's opposition to equal civil and adoption rights was less pronounced when it concerned lesbians and was stronger when it referred to gay men's rights. Comparably, Moskowitz et al.'s (2010) analysis based on a sample of predominantly white, unmarried, American undergraduate students showed that when compared to heterosexual women, heterosexual men showed more negative attitudes toward gay male marriage than they did when asked about lesbian marriage. Nonetheless, prior research conducted in Romania did not identify gender-based differences in tolerance of homosexuality (Spina 2016) or opposition to equal rights for homosexual individuals (Andreescu 2011).

Research findings frequently showed that more educated people and/or those with a higher socioeconomic status tend to have lower levels of sexual prejudice (Adamczyk 2017; Ayoub 2016; Bartoş et al. 2014; Herek 2002a; Herek and Gonzalez-Rivera 2006; Norton and Herek 2013; West and Cowell 2015). Similarly, support of equal rights for sexual minorities, including marital and adoption rights generally increases with one's level of education (Becker 2012; Hayes 1997; Schwartz 2010). Nonetheless, exceptions do exist. Using data collected in three US states, Brumbaugh et al. (2008) found that persons who had less than a high-school education expressed the lowest amount of opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage. Conversely, persons whose highest educational level was high school had the most negative attitudes toward gay marriage. Although prior research conducted in Romania (Andreescu 2011) did not find a significant relationship between one's education and opposition to gay rights, the study noted that

individuals whose parents were highly educated were significantly more likely to support equal rights for sexual minorities. While a recent study conducted in two Scandinavian countries acknowledged that an increase in education significantly predicted support for same-sex marriage, one's income did not appear to influence people's attitudes about sexual minorities' marital rights (Jakobsson et al. 2013). Brumbaugh et al. (2008) also contended that the family income was not a significant predictor of public attitudes toward same-sex marriage in United States.

As several studies demonstrated, one's marital status may influence attitudes toward sexual minorities, as well. In her analysis of data from 87 societies, Adamczyk (2017) observed that those who were single, divorced/separated, or living with a partner had more positive attitudes about homosexuality than married individuals did. Similarly, Brumbaugh and her colleagues found that persons who never married, those who were divorced/separated, and those who recently cohabitated were significantly less likely to oppose equal marital rights for sexual minorities than married people did. However, persons who had children were more likely to oppose the legalization of same-sex marriages (Brumbaugh et al. 2008).

A recent study on tolerance toward homosexuality in Romania and Bulgaria did not find that married individuals differed in their attitudes toward homosexuality from persons who had a different marital status (Spina 2016). Prior research conducted in Romania (Andreescu 2011) found, however, that individuals who acknowledged pre-marital cohabitation were significantly more likely to support equal rights for homosexuals than were persons who stated they never lived with a partner without being married.

In addition to age, gender, socioeconomic status, and marital status, several research studies also examined the impact of the respondent's place of residence on public attitudes toward homosexuality in general and toward gay rights, in particular. Although findings across studies appear to be inconsistent, some research studies found that residents of rural areas tend to manifest higher levels of sexual prejudice (Herek 2002a), while residents of urban areas tend to be more tolerant toward homosexuality (Ayoub 2016; Herek 2004; Takács and Szalma 2011). However, one study found that residing in rural/small towns had no significant effects on attitudes toward transgender people (Norton and Herek 2013). Nonetheless, Jakobsson et al. (2013) identified a stronger support for the legalization of same-sex marriage in the capital cities of Norway and Sweden, while Andreescu (2011) contended that in Romania, residents of large cities were

significantly less likely to oppose equal rights for sexual minorities when compared to people living in villages or small towns.

### **Data, Methods, and Hypotheses**

The source of the data is the Special Eurobarometer 437 – wave 83.4. The Eurobarometer survey has been conducted in 28 EU member states at the request of the European Commission - Directorate General for Communication. In Romania, the survey was carried out by TNS CSOP from 05/30/2015 to 6/08/2015 on a multi-stage probability sample (N=1,012), which was representative for the Romanian population age 15 and older (European Commission, 2016). In terms of the respondents' social orientation, the sample is quite homogenous (i.e., 99.4% of the study participants self-identified as heterosexuals). In order to detect the individual-level characteristics that predict opposition to equal rights for sexual minorities (including marriage equality rights), the following variables will be included in the multivariate analyses:

#### ***Dependent variables***

*Heterosexist attitudes*<sup>29</sup> – The first dependent variable is a dummy measure coded 1 for respondents who tended to disagree or totally disagreed with the statement “*Gay, lesbian and bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people.*” Persons who showed support for sexual minorities' equal rights and those who did not express an opinion were coded zero.

*Opposition to same-sex marriage* – This is also a dummy variable coded 1 if the respondents (totally) disagreed with the statement “*Same sex marriages should be allowed throughout Europe.*” Persons who (totally) agreed with the statement and the undecided were coded zero.

#### ***Independent and control variables***

*Post-materialist values* – This ordinal-level variable is used here as a proxy measure of post-materialism (see Inglehart, 1997)<sup>30</sup>. Respondents have been given the statement “Sometimes

---

<sup>29</sup> Although the term heterosexism has been utilized inconsistently in the literature, Herek contended that heterosexism refers to a cultural ideology that perpetuates sexual stigma and includes beliefs about gender and morality, which define sexual minorities as “deviant, sinful, and threatening.” Heterosexism provides the rationale for the society's hostility and discriminatory attitudes toward non-heterosexual individuals (Herek 2004, 15-16).

<sup>30</sup> Inglehart's (1997, 355) post-materialist index contains a 12-item battery that refers to the respondent's preferences regarding national priorities and policy preferences. Some of these items are maintaining order in the nation vs. giving people more say in decisions of the government; fighting rising prices vs. protecting freedom of speech; making sure the country has strong defense forces vs. trying to make our cities and countryside more beautiful. The Eurobarometer

economic development results in damage or destruction of nature in protected areas” and have been asked if, in their opinion, this is acceptable. Based on the respondent’s selection, the answer has been coded 1 (“This is acceptable because economic development takes precedence”), 2 (“This is only acceptable for projects of major public interest and if the damage is fully compensated for through restoration or mitigation measures”), or 3 (“This should be prohibited because these are our most important nature areas”). *EU identification* – Respondents who showed agreement with the statement “My voice counts in the EU” have been coded 1 and the others zero.

*Interpersonal contacts with sexual minorities* – Respondents have been coded 1 if they acknowledged having friends/acquaintances who belong to sexual and/or gender minority groups (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and transsexual individuals) and zero otherwise. *Social distance* – This is a composite measure constructed via principal component analysis (PCA). It includes responses at four questions that asked respondents if they would feel comfortable having in the highest elected political position or as a colleague a person who is gay, bisexual, transgender, or transsexual. Initial responses varied from 1 (Not at all comfortable) to 10 (Totally comfortable). The reliability coefficient Alpha for this measure is .871. Only one factor with a value higher than one has been obtained (Eigenvalue = 2.957) and the variance it explained equals 73.93%. The factor loadings vary from .84 to .88. Higher values indicate a high acceptance level or low social distance between respondent and the hypothetical member of a sexual or gender minority group. *Family distance* – This measure is also a composite variable based on two questionnaire items. The question was: “Regardless of whether you have children or not, please tell me, using a scale from 1 to 10, how comfortable you would feel if one of your children was in a love relationship with a person from each of the following groups: (1) a person of the same sex; (2) a transgender or a transsexual person.” The measure is reliable (Alpha = .851) and has construct validity (Eigenvalue = 1.743; variance explained = 87.15%; factor loadings = .934). Higher values indicate a higher level of social acceptance.

*Religious affiliation*<sup>31</sup> – Catholics and respondents belonging to Neo-Protestant denominations have been coded 1 and the others zero. *Marital status (single)* – Single (unmarried)

---

survey used in this analysis did not include any measure that would be similar to the original components of Inglehart’s index. The selected questionnaire item captures, however, one of main ideas used in the construction of the original index.

<sup>31</sup> The survey did not include any variables that would assess one’s degree of religiosity and the relationship between religiosity and attitudes toward LGBT rights could not be assessed. Additionally, the initial intention to dichotomize the variable into believers and non-believers failed because only three respondents in the sample declared they were

persons with or without children, who do not live with a partner have been coded 1, while the others have been coded zero. *Social class*<sup>32</sup> – Respondents who self-identified as members of the working or low-middle classes have been coded 1, while those belonging to middle, upper-middle, and upper classes have been coded zero. *Economic disadvantage* – Respondents who found always/sometimes difficult to pay their bills have been coded 1, while the others have been coded zero. *Internet usage* – This ordinal-level variable takes values from 1 (daily usage) to 7 (never used/no access). *Gender* – Male respondents have been coded 1 and female respondents have been coded zero. *Place of residence* – Respondents residing in villages/rural areas of Romania have been coded 1, while residents of urban areas have been coded zero. *Region* – Residents of the South-East and South-Muntenia regions have been coded 1; residents from the rest of the regions and from Bucharest have been coded zero.

### ***Hypotheses***

Informed by prior research, the present study hypothesizes that Romanians' attitudes toward sexual minorities' civil rights, including same-sex marriage rights will be shaped by various contextual and individual-level factors. Specifically, heterosexist attitudes and opposition to the legalization of same-sex marriage across EU states is anticipated to be higher among males, middle-age and older individuals, persons with a lower socioeconomic status, residents of rural areas, and persons with limited access to information and communication technology, such as the internet. While limited or lack of internet usage could reflect economic disadvantage and social inequality, it may be also viewed as an indicator of social isolation<sup>33</sup> and as one's resistance to modernity.<sup>34</sup>

---

atheists or non-believers. The large majority of the respondents (88.5%) belonged to the Christian Orthodox Church, 5.3% were Catholics, 3.2% Protestants and 1% belonged to other Christian denominations. There was only one Muslim person in the sample and 1.6% of the respondents refused to answer the question.

<sup>32</sup> The survey did not include a specific question regarding one's level of education. One questionnaire item asked respondents how old they were when they stopped attending school. Additional analyses showed a positive and significant correlation between self-assessed social class and the respondent's age when he/she stopped attending school. Specifically, the Pearson's coefficient for the correlation between working/low middle-class and age 19 or lower at the end of the studies is .25 (p. <.001), suggesting that respondents in this group generally have high-school education or less. In Romania, children typically enter the elementary school when they are seven years old and graduate from high school at age 19.

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed discussion of the "digital divide" and its implications at the macro and micro levels, see Sparks (2013).

<sup>34</sup> Carlo-Gonzales et al. (2017) observed a higher respect for gay rights in countries that had higher internet access rates.

Conversely, persons with high acceptance levels of sexual and gender minorities, those with post-materialist attitudes, persons who identify with European Union's norms and values, persons who had social contacts with members of sexual/gender minority groups, and those who are not married are expected to be proponents of sexual minorities' equal rights. Additionally, variation in attitudes about sexual minorities' civil rights are expected to be influenced by the religious denomination a person belongs to and by the region, one lives in.

## Results

Based on data collected in 2015 (European Commission, 2016), the percentage of persons who do not think that sexual minorities should have the same rights as heterosexual individuals varies among EU residents from a low 3.5% in Sweden to a high 56.6% in Slovakia (Figure 1). Romania has the second largest proportion (54.6%) of persons who oppose equal rights for sexual minorities and is one of the few European countries (5), where the majority of the population age 15 and over expressed heterosexist attitudes toward sexual minorities.

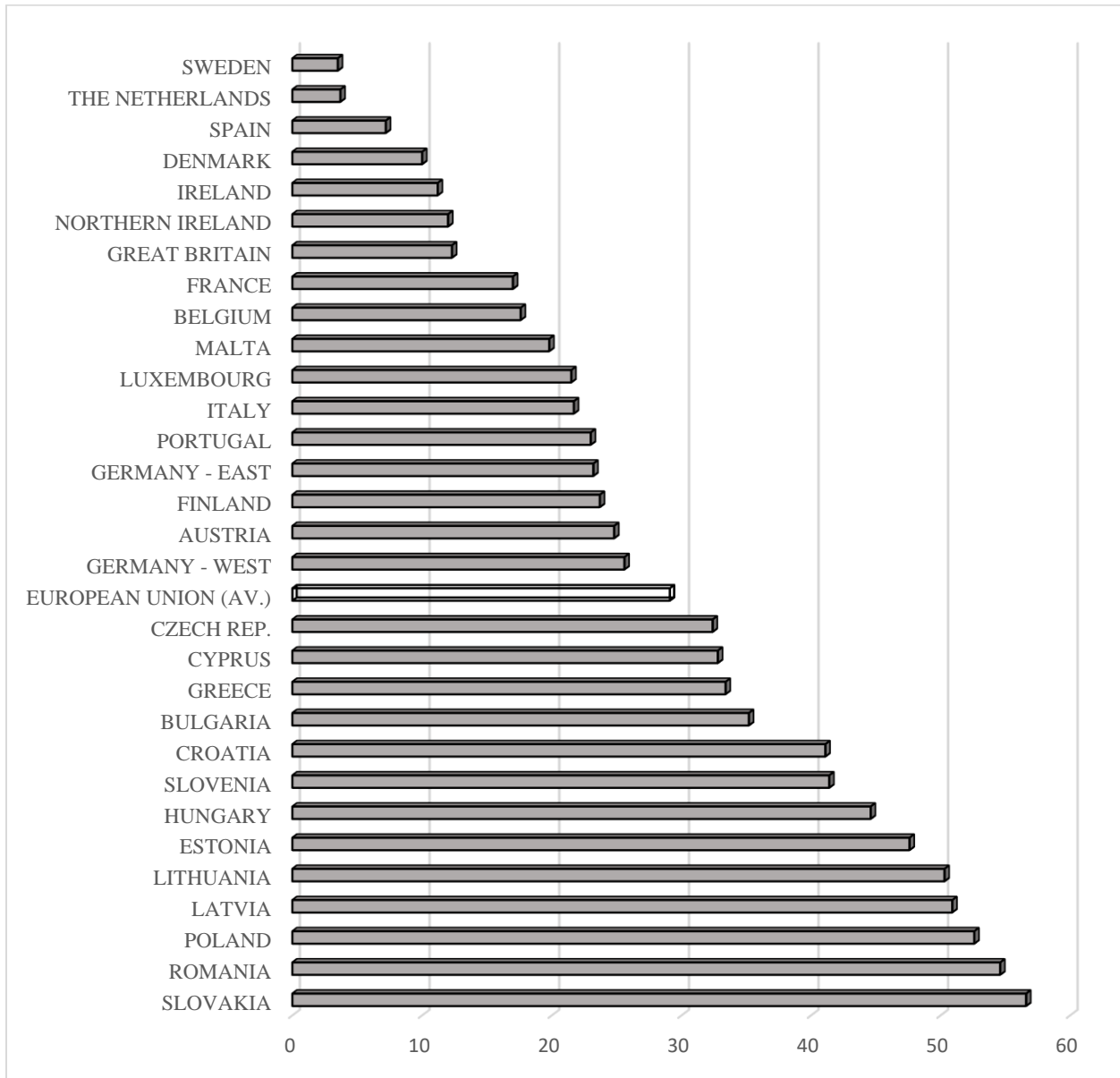
Further analyses are conducted to identify the factors more likely to predict Romanians' attitudes toward sexual minorities' civil rights. Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and range) for all the variables included in the multivariate models. Additionally, the correlation coefficients (Pearson's  $r$ ) show the strength of the bivariate relationships between the main dependent variables, as well as between each dependent variable and the selected independent variables.

It can be noticed that respondents who oppose equal rights for sexual minorities are significantly more likely ( $r = .62$ ;  $p < .001$ ) to oppose legislation that would allow same-sex couples all over the European Union to enter into legal marital partnerships. Bivariate correlations also show that with the exception of gender, all the selected predictors are significantly related to the first dependent variable, when controls are not introduced in the equation. Specifically, these preliminary analyses show that Romanian males and females do not differ in their attitudes regarding LGBT rights. Additionally, results indicate that those who oppose equal rights for sexual minorities are more likely to live in rural areas, they belong to the working class or to lower middle class, they acknowledged financial difficulties, they are less likely to access the internet, and they are 55 years old or older. Catholics and adherents to neo-protestant churches are more likely to



oppose equal rights for sexual minorities than do residents who adhered to the Christian Orthodox church, are Muslims, atheists, or agnostics.

**Figure 1: Heterosexist Attitudes in European Union in 2015**



Source: Eurobarometer 437 (European Commission, 2016). The chart shows the percentage of persons age 15 and over, who disagreed/totally disagreed with the statement: “Gay, lesbian and bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people.”

Results also indicate that those who oppose equal rights for sexual minorities are more likely to be residents of South East and South Muntenia. Additional analyses (not shown) indicate

that while on average, about 55% of Romanians are more likely to oppose equal rights for sexual minorities, in South Muntenia and in the Southeast region, about 71% of the respondents shared these conservative attitudes. The highest level of acceptance of the sexual minorities' civil liberties is registered in Bucharest, where only 32% of the population expressed opposition to sexual minorities' equal rights.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics & Bivariate Correlations (N=1,012)**

Variable	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	r	
					DV1	DV2
Heterosexism (DV1)	.55	.49	0	1	-	
Opposition to same-sex marriage (DV2)	.69	.46	0	1	.62***	-
Post-materialist attitude	2.14	.77	1	3	-.09**	-.10***
EU identification	.42	.49	0	1	-.10***	-.13***
Interpersonal contacts	.00	1.00	-.24	5.68	-.16***	-.18***
Social distance (acceptance)	.00	1.00	-1.16	2.21	-.38***	-.33***
Family distance (acceptance)	.00	1.00	-.79	2.57	-.29***	-.34***
Religious affiliation (Catholics + NP)	.06	.24	0	1	.07*	.07*
Marital status (single)	.16	.37	0	1	-.09**	-.07*
Social class (W + LMC)	.45	.50	0	1	.15***	.20***
Economic disadvantage	.41	.49	0	1	.13***	.04
Internet usage (low)	3.51	2.44	1	7	.20***	.13***
Gender (male)	.48	.50	0	1	-.05	-.01
Age (55 years old and over)	.36	.48	0	1	.16***	.12***
Region (South-East + South Muntenia)	.29	.45	0	1	.21***	.20***
Residence (rural)	.48	.49	0	1	.10***	.05

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (2-tail test)

Nonetheless, Romanian respondents who have friends/acquaintances belonging to LGBT groups are significantly less likely to oppose equal rights for sexual minorities. Persons who would feel comfortable having as the highest-rank elected politician or as a colleague a LGBT person, share similar opinions, as are individuals who would not mind their children being in a same-sex

love relationship. Approximately 43% of Romanians believe they have a “voice in the EU” and 38% consider that economic development should be prohibited in nature-protected areas, even when the proposed projects would be of major public interest and the potential damage to nature in the area would be fully compensated. Respondents who appear to identify with the European Union’s values and those sharing post-materialist values are also more likely to support equal rights for sexual minorities.

### *Heterosexist attitudes*

Table 2 presents the results of two multivariate analyses that try to identify the individual-level characteristics more likely to predict opposition to equal rights for sexual minorities in Romania. Model 1 includes only the main predictors, while model 2 shows the results of the bivariate logistic regression analysis, when the control variables are introduced in the equation.

As anticipated by prior bivariate analyses, findings show (Model 1) that the odds of opposing equal rights for sexual minorities decrease significantly by 49% (OR = .510;  $p < .001$ ) and by 23.7% (OR = .763;  $p = .001$ ) with a decrease in one’s social and family distance to members of LGBT groups. Additionally, social interaction with members of LGBT groups predicts a 21.7% decrease (OR = .783;  $p < .01$ ) in the odds of opposing equal rights for sexual minorities. These significant effects are preserved in the full model as well. The effects of post-materialist attitudes and of one’s identification with the EU values are weak and no longer significant. Yet, the direction of these effects remained negative in both models, as hypothesized.

Additionally, opponents of equal rights for sexual minorities are more likely to be members of minority religious groups, such as Catholics and persons belonging to Christian denominations, other than the Christian Orthodox church. While initial analyses indicated that unmarried persons (with or without children) were more likely to oppose unequal rights for sexual minorities, one’s marital status does not differentiate any longer equal-rights opponents from those who express more liberal attitudes or are undecided. Opposition to equal rights for sexual minorities is increasing significantly with a decrease in one’s usage of the internet. Compared to residents from Bucharest and other regions in the country, residents of the Southeast region and South-Muntenia manifest the strongest heterosexist attitudes.

**Table 2: Logit estimates of heterosexist attitudes in Romania (N=1,012)**

Variable	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE	OR	p	B	SE	OR	p
Post-materialism	-.142	.09	.868	.114	-.096	.09	.908	.302
EU identification	-.235	.14	.790	.095	-.095	.15	.910	.532
Interpersonal contacts	-.245**	.09	.783	.006	-.242**	.09	.785	.010
Social distance (low)	-.672***	.08	.510	.000	-.649***	.09	.522	.000
Family distance (low)	-.270***	.08	.763	.001	-.194*	.08	.785	.021
Religion (Catholic + NP)					.914**	.31	2.495	.004
Marital status (single)					.005	.21	1.005	.979
Social class (W + LMC)					-.027	.16	.973	.867
Economic disadvantage					.227	.15	1.255	.141
Internet usage (low)					.102**	.04	1.107	.008
Gender (male)					-.153	.15	.858	.297
Age (55+)					.361*	.18	1.434	.048
Region (SE + S Muntenia)					.768***	.17	2.154	.000
Residence (rural)					.217	.15	1.242	.154
Constant	.588**	.213	1.800	.006	-.417	.28	.659	.140
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)	.220				.288			

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (2-tail test); B = logistic regression coefficient; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio.

***Opposition to same-sex marriage***

As shown in table 1, public attitudes toward LGBT overall civil liberties is the strongest determinant of public attitudes regarding same-sex couples’ marital rights. Specifically, preliminary analyses (not included) indicate that 95.3% of the respondents who do not think that LGBT persons should have the same civil rights as heterosexual individuals also oppose marriage equality for same-sex couples. Additionally, 38.4% of the respondents who did not express a clear opposition to equal rights for minorities in general (i.e., 39% of the initial supporters and 34% of the undecided), do not think that same-sex marriage should be allowed throughout Europe.

Further analyses have been conducted to identify the characteristics of the Romanian residents who tend to oppose or are totally against legislation that would allow same-sex marriages in the European Union. The results of the logistic regression analyses are presented in table 3.

**Table 3: Logit estimates of Romanians' opposition to same-sex marriage (N=1,012)**

Variable	Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE	OR	p	B	SE	OR	p
Post-materialism	-.170	.09	.844	.079	-.156	.10	.856	.116
EU identification	-.364*	.15	.695	.015	-.244	.16	.783	.125
Interpersonal contacts	-.212**	.07	.809	.005	-.185*	.08	.832	.019
Social distance (low)	-.466***	.08	.627	.000	-.467***	.09	.627	.000
Family distance (low)	-.450***	.08	.637	.000	-.382***	.08	.683	.000
Religion					.929*	.36	2.532	.011
Marital status (single)					.000	.22	1.000	.999
Social class (W + LMC)					.516**	.18	1.676	.003
Economic disadvantage					-.301	.16	.740	.071
Internet usage (low)					.040	.04	1.040	.337
Gender (male)					.051	.16	1.052	.746
Age (55+)					.216	.20	1.242	.274
Region (SE + S Muntenia)					.828***	.20	2.290	.000
Residence (rural)					-.009	.16	.991	.958
Constant	1.461***	.23	4.312	.000	.814**	.30	2.257	.006
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup> (Nagelkerke)		.213				.266		

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001 (2-tail test); B = logistic regression coefficient; SE = standard error; OR = odds ratio.

The first set of analyses (Model 1) includes only the main predictors. It can be noticed that with the exception of the indicator used here as a proxy of post-materialist values, the selected predictors have significant and negative impacts on the dependent variable. In sum, persons who identify with the European Union, those who have interpersonal contacts with members of LGBT groups, as well as those who manifest a high level of acceptance and do not distance themselves from persons who are part of a sexual minority are significantly less likely to oppose same-sex

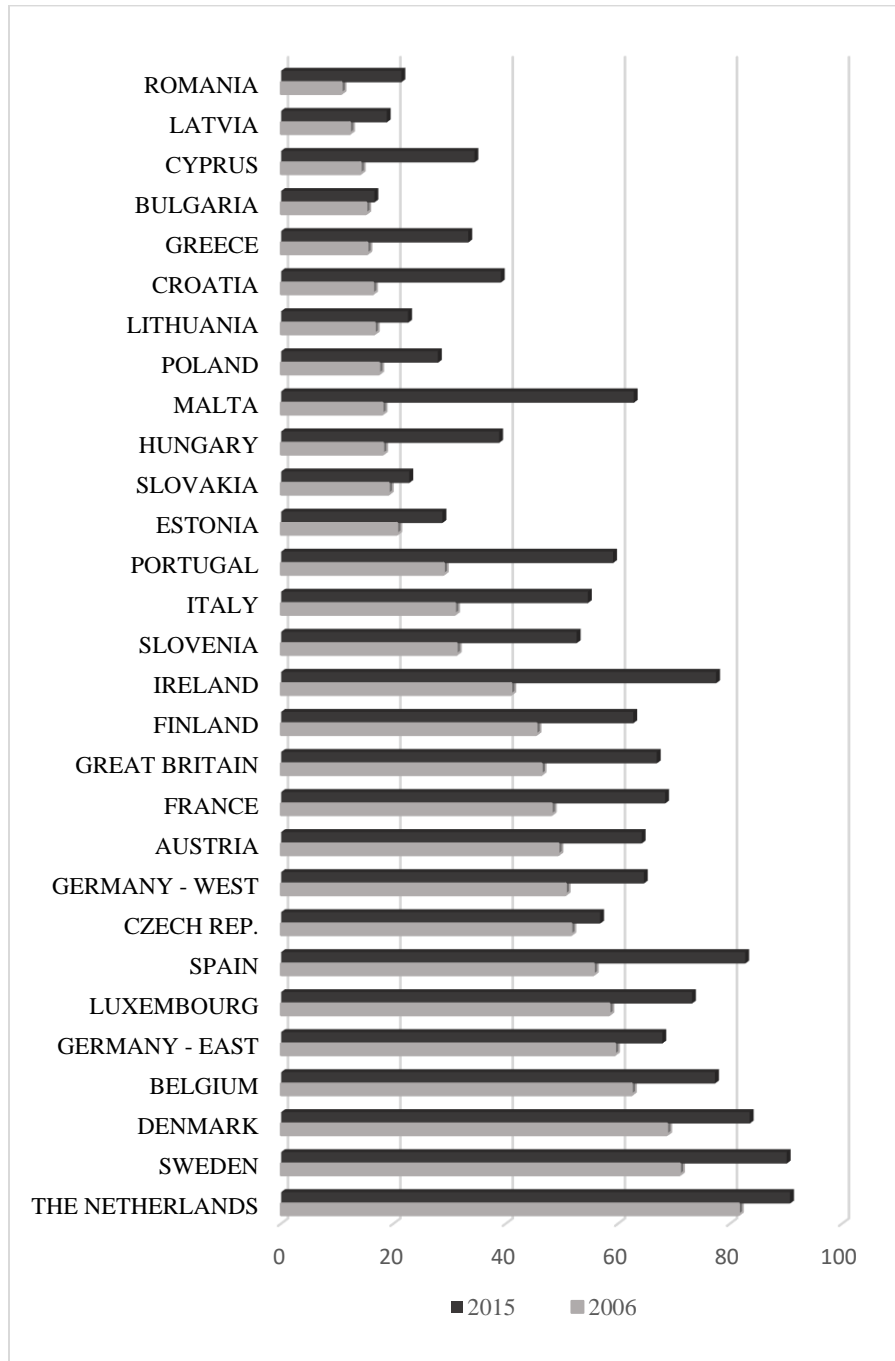
marriage throughout Europe. Although the effects of these variables on the dependent variable appear to be mediated by the control variables introduced in model 2, for the most part, the initial predictors continue to remain significant in the full model. Similar to prior analyses (see Table 2), religious minorities, such as Catholics and members of Neo-Protestant churches, as well as residents of South Muntenia and the Southeastern region are more likely to oppose same-sex marriages than persons belonging to other religious denominations and residents of other regions, respectively. Different from prior analyses (see Table 2), when one's social class did not significantly differentiate equal rights opponents from supporters and the undecided, it can be observed that opposition to marriage equality is stronger among persons who self-identified with the working and low-middle classes. Yet, age, gender, marital status, or place of residence do not appear to influence significantly Romanians' opinions regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage.

Although about seven out of ten Romanians (69%) age 15 and over, oppose marriage-equality rights for sexual minorities, based on historical data (see Figure 2), it can be noticed that in 2015, Romanians became more tolerant regarding same-sex couples than they used to be a decade ago. In figure 2, countries are presented in ascending order based on the percentage of respondents who declared in 2006 that they "tend to agree" or "totally agree" with same-sex marriages to be allowed throughout Europe. Although among EU countries Romania had in 2006 the lowest percentage (10.7%) of supporters for sexual minorities' marriage rights, one decade later, the proportion of Romanians supporting same-sex marriages (21.4%) doubled. This one hundred percent increase in favor of legislative changes that would expand the sexual minorities' civil rights suggests that this positive trend may continue.

From 2006 to 2015, all EU countries registered an increase in public support for the sexual minorities' equal rights to marriage. Consequently, as of 2018, the large majority of EU member states legally recognize same-sex relationships, despite the fact that not in all of them the public support was higher than 50%. Currently, in the EU, only Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia do not offer same-sex couples any kind of legal recognition (Carroll and Mendos 2017).



**Figure 2: “Same-Sex Marriages Should Be Allowed throughout Europe”  
 Societal Support in 2015 vs. 2006 (%)**



Source: Eurobarometer 66 (2006) and Eurobarometer 437 (2015).

## Discussion and Conclusion

The present study tried to identify the potential sources of Romanians' resistance to social change, which would imply changes in human interactions and cultural norms and would transform social institutions, if LGBT rights would be fully recognized. Consistent with prior research (Barth et al. 2009; Barth and Parry 2009; Bartoş et al. 2014; Becker 2012; Brewer 2008; Dyck and Pearson-Merkowitz 2014; Garner 2013; Lewis 2011; Santona and Tognasso 2018; Swank and Raiz 2010; Wood and Bartkovski 2004) and as it has been hypothesized, interpersonal contact with LGBT persons predicts support for sexual minorities' civil rights and same-sex marriage. Similar to Carlo-Gonzales et al.'s (2017) findings, persons willing to accept sexual minorities as high-rank public officials, colleagues, and/or as family members are less likely to oppose equal rights for LGBT individuals, including marriage equality rights.

As Ayoub (2016, 135) noted, "proponents of LGBT rights in the EU consciously frame the LGBT norm as one of European democratic values and responsibilities." As anticipated and related to prior findings (Ayoub 2016; Sloomaeckers and Sircar 2018), Romanians who feel they have a voice in the European Union, which was considered here an indicator of one's identification with EU norms and values, are also more likely to favor EU norms regarding marriage equality.

Although the multivariate analyses do not suggest that having post-materialist values is necessarily a significant predictor of public attitudes regarding LGBT rights, results should be cautiously interpreted. A limitation of the present research is that it made use of secondary data and a composite measure of post-materialist values could not be created because appropriate indicators were not available. By using a single-item measure, which is more prone to measurement errors, findings could have been affected and future research should try to overcome the shortcomings of the present study. Nonetheless, as several scholars have noted (Ayoub 2016), modernity appears to be an important source of norm and value changes in Romania. As previous research (Carlo-Gonzales et al. 2017) indicated, individuals who had limited access to the internet manifested a low respect for LGBT rights, as well. Additional analyses showed that when the data have been collected, 44.2% of the study participants were never using the internet. About 61% of internet non-users lived in rural areas, they were on average 18 years old when they stopped attending school, 47% experienced financial difficulties, were more likely to be women, and were 55 years old or older. Additionally, those with no internet access showed no interest in political matters, tended to have a negative image of the European Union, and 63% of them did not identify

with the European Union. All these characteristics are generally predicting opposition to gay rights.

As previously noted, prior research observed that in Europe, adherence to the Christian Orthodox Church was usually associated with lower acceptance of sexual minorities (Ayoub 2016). Additional analyses showed that in Romania, where the majority of the population belongs to this church, opinions regarding equal rights for sexual minorities are divided among Christian Orthodox respondents. Nevertheless, results showed that people belonging to religious minority groups, such as Catholics and persons who adhere to other Christian denominations (e.g., Neo-Protestants) appear to express the highest opposition to LGBT rights, in general, and marriage equality, in particular. As Collier et al. (2015, 143) noted, “assessments of religious affiliation alone are, however, limited measures of an individual's exposure to and engagement with specific religious teachings related to homosexuality” and future research should include among the predictors of attitudes about sexual minorities rights a measure of *religiosity*, which was not available in the version of the Eurobarometer used here.

Different from prior research (Becker 2012; Brumbaugh et al. 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn 2005; Lannutti and Lachlan 2007; Lewis and Gossett 2008; Moskowitz et al. 2010; Olson et al. 2006; Pearl and Galupo 2007), but consistent with prior studies conducted in Romania (Andreescu 2011) and elsewhere (Davies 2004; Hayes 1997; Kite and Whitley 1996), findings show that Romanian women do not differ significantly from their male counterparts in terms of their support/opposition to LGBT rights. Considering the fact that Ayoub's (2016) recent analysis of attitudes toward homosexuality in the European Union also found that in Eastern Europe (EU-12) the gender-based difference in the public perception of homosexuality was smaller than it was in Western Europe (EU-15), this finding is not surprising. Moreover, additional analyses show that even if Romanian women do not differ significantly from men in terms of social interaction with sexual minorities, socio-economic status (education and income), or place of residence, they are less likely to be single and they are significantly less likely to use modern communication technologies. Additionally, while Romanian men tend to have a negative view of the European Union, they are more likely to identify with EU than women do. A combination of all these factors, some associated with support for equal rights, others with opposition toward civil rights for sexual minorities could explain the lack of gender-based difference between Romanian men and women in terms of sexual prejudice and attitudes toward equal rights for sexual minorities.

Although age did not appear to differentiate opponents from supporters of marriage equality rights, findings show that older individuals are generally more likely to oppose equal rights for sexual minorities, as prior research (Hayes 1997; Takács and Szalma 2011) also found. Similar to other studies (e.g., Spina 2016), when controlling for the variables included in the statistical models, one's marital status does not appear to explain variations in Romanians' attitudes regarding equal rights for sexual minorities. Neither does one's place of residence (rural vs. urban). Additional analyses, however, indicate that the lowest opposition toward sexual minorities' rights is found in Bucharest. In the capital city of Romania, less than a third of the respondents (32%) declared that LGBT persons should not have the same rights as heterosexual individuals, while the country average was 55%.

Although the self-assessed social class does not affect significantly Romanians' attitudes toward LGBT rights in general, working class and lower middle-class individuals, which represent 45% of the sampled population, express the highest opposition toward same-sex marriage rights. Additional analyses (not shown) indicate that compared to individuals in higher social classes, persons in this group have a significantly lower level of acceptance of sexual and gender minorities in the work place ( $t = -4.983$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and in the family ( $t = -5.910$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Moreover, they experience more financial difficulties ( $t = 6.889$ ;  $p < .001$ ), stopped attending school at a younger age ( $t = -2.897$ ;  $p < .01$ ), have limited access to or never use the internet ( $t = 10.602$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and are less likely to identify with the European Union norms and values ( $t = -7.778$ ;  $p < .001$ ).

Findings also show that during the past decade (i.e., from 2006 to 2015), some visible changes in the geographic distribution of heterosexist attitudes have occurred in Romania. If in 2006, residents of the Northeastern region of Romania expressed the highest opposition to equal rights for sexual minorities, almost one decade later, the highest proportion (41%) of those who support marriage equality throughout Europe is observed in the North-East. The proportion of those who live in the Northeastern region and oppose equal rights for LGBT persons (48%) is also below the country average. Conversely, the highest opposition to equal rights for sexual minorities was observed in South Muntenia and the Southeast, where in each region, about 71% of the respondents expressed heterosexist attitudes. In these two regions, only 9% (South Muntenia) and 14.3% (South East) of the respondents acknowledged clear support for marriage equality throughout Europe.

It is possible that differences in perceptions and attitudes could be partially explained by regional differences in migratory trends registered in Romania in recent years, and consequently, by variations in people's direct exposure to modern western societal values. Based on a rigorous analysis of the direct and indirect effects of labor migration experiences at the individual and community levels, Sandu (2010, 284-5) contended that returning migrants brought modernity to their communities. The author also noted that for many Romanian migrants, working abroad was "an opportunity to change one's way of thinking" about work, life strategies, and social relations. Pushed by higher poverty levels, residents from the Northeastern region of the country have longer migration experiences than those from South Muntenia and the South East (Sandu 2010). Additionally, Eurobarometer data collected in 2010 showed that 50% of Northeastern residents had close relatives living abroad, while the percentage of those with family members living in foreign countries was lower in South Muntenia (27%) and the Southeastern (36%) regions. Moreover, 12% of the respondents from Northeast worked abroad, while only 4% of those from the South East and 5% of South Muntenia's residents migrated for work in other EU country. Findings also showed that if about 58% of the residents of North East showed attachment to the European Union, only 33% and 41% of their counterparts in South Muntenia and South East, respectively, shared similar opinions (Sandu 2011). Considering the fact that most Romanian labor migrants worked in Spain (and Italy), a country with very progressive attitudes toward sexual minorities' rights, it is possible that the attitudinal changes registered in North East have been a result of the diffusion of the European Union's LGBT norms. Yet, future research should explore in more detail the causes of the regional variations in sexual prejudice and public opinion about LGBT rights, by considering various transnational channels that may influence public attitudes in Romania (see also Ayoub 2016).

Although more than half of the Romanians tend to oppose equal rights for LGBT persons and seven out of ten respondents do not favor the legalization of same-sex marriage throughout Europe, in 2015, the amount of support for same-sex marriage was twice higher than a decade ago, suggesting that Romanians' reluctance to accept the LGBT norms could diminish in time. Moreover, considering the general trend in the European Union, it is unlikely that the socially conservative countries of Eastern Europe will maintain for long their current restrictive policies and legislation regarding sexual minorities' domestic partnership/marital rights.

Social change, however, is a lengthy process that cannot occur overnight, especially in traditional societies, like Romania. Yet, when more Romanians will adopt secular-rational and self-expression values and the country will be regarded as a post-materialist society (see Inglehart and Welzel 2005), a visible positive change in public attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities' rights is more likely to follow.

## References

- Adamczyk, Amy. 2017. *Cross-National Public Opinion about Homosexuality: Examining Attitudes across the Globe*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.
- Allport, Gordon. 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Andreescu, Viviana. 2011. "From Legal Tolerance to Social Acceptance: Predictors of Heterosexism in Romania." *Revista Romana de Sociologie* 22 (3-4): 209-31.
- Ayoub, Philip M. 2016. *When States Come Out: Europe's Sexual Minorities and the Politics of Visibility*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Barth, Jay, Overby, L. Marvin, and Huffmon, Scott H. 2009. "Community Context, Personal Contact, and Support for an Anti-Gay Rights Referendum." *Political Research Quarterly* 62(2): 355–65.
- Barth, Jay, and Parry, Janine. 2009. "The Impact of Contact with Gay and Lesbian Couples on Attitudes about Gays/Lesbians and Gay-Related Policies." *Politics & Policy* 37(1): 31–50.
- Bartoş, Sebastian E., Israel Berger, and Peter Hegarty. 2014. "Interventions to Reduce Sexual Prejudice: A Study-Space Analysis and Meta-Analytic Review." *Journal of Sex Research* 51(4): 363-82.
- Baunach, Dawn M., Elisabeth O. Burgess, and Courtney S. Muse. 2009. "Southern (Dis)comfort: Sexual Prejudice and Contact with Gay Men and Lesbians in the South." *Sociological Spectrum* 20(1): 30-64.
- Becker, Amy B. 2012. "Determinants of Public Support for Same-Sex Marriage: Generational Cohorts, Social Contact and Shifting Attitudes." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 24(4): 524–33.
- Bogardus, Emory S. 1925. "Measuring Social Distances." *Journal of Applied Sociology* 9: 299-308.
- Brewer, Paul. 2008. *Value War: Public Opinion and the Politics of Gay Rights*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Brumbaugh, Stacey M., Laura A. Sanchez, Steven L. Nock, and James D. Wright. 2008. "Attitudes toward Gay Marriage in States Undergoing Marriage Law Transformation." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 70: 345-59.
- Carlo-Gonzales, Celin, Christopher McKallagat, and Jenifer Whitten-Woodring. 2017. "The Rainbow Effect: Media Freedom, Internet Access, and Gay Rights." *Social Science Quarterly* 98(3): 1061-77.



- Carroll, Aengus and Lucas R. Mendos. 2017. *State Sponsored Homophobia 2017. A World Survey of Sexual Orientation Laws: Criminalisation, Protection and Recognition*. (12<sup>th</sup> Ed.) Geneva: ILGA. [http://ilga.org/downloads/2017/ILGA\\_State\\_Sponsored\\_Homophobia\\_2017\\_WEB.pdf](http://ilga.org/downloads/2017/ILGA_State_Sponsored_Homophobia_2017_WEB.pdf)
- Carroll, Aengus and George Robotham. 2017. *Minorities Report 2017: Attitudes to Sexual and Gender Minorities around the World*. Geneva: ILGA. <https://ilga.org/ilga-riwi-global-attitudes-survey>
- Collier, Kate L. Stacey S. Horn, Henny M. W. Bos, and Theo G. M. Sandfort. 2015. "Attitudes toward Lesbians and Gays among American and Dutch Adolescents." *Journal of Sex Research* 52(2): 140-50.
- Consiliul National pentru Combaterea Discriminarii (CNCD). 2018. *Proiect de Lege privind Parteneriatul Civil*. <http://cncd.org.ro/2018-03-29-proiect-de-lege-privind-parteneriatul-civil>
- Davies, Michelle. 2004. "Correlates of Negative Attitudes toward Gay Men: Sexism, Male Role Norms, and Male Sexuality." *Journal of Sex Research* 41(3): 259-66.
- Dion, Michelle L. and Jordi Diez. 2017. "Democratic Values, Religiosity, and Support for Same-Sex Marriage in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society* 59(4): 75-98.
- Dyck, Joshua, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz. 2014. "To Know You Is Not Necessarily to Love You: The Partisan Mediators of Intergroup Contact." *Political Behavior* 36:553–80.
- European Commission. 2016. *Eurobarometer 83.4: Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Discrimination of Minority Groups, May-June 2015*. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2016-06-22. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR36403.v1>
- European Commission. 2017a. *Standard Eurobarometer 87 – Annex. Public Opinion in the European Union: Key Trends*. <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/ResultDoc/79118>
- European Commission. 2017b. *Standard Eurobarometer 88: National Reports – Romania*. <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2143>
- Flores, Andrew R. 2015. "Attitudes toward Transgender Rights: Perceived Knowledge and Secondary Interpersonal Contact." *Politics, Groups, and Identities* 3:398–416.
- Garner, Andrew. 2013. "Ambivalence, the Intergroup Contact Hypothesis, and Attitudes about Gay Rights." *Politics & Policy* 41:241–66.
- Gentry, Cynthia. 1987. "Social Distance Regarding Male and Female Homosexuals." *Journal of Social Psychology* 127(2): 199-208.
- Gheorghiu, Mihai. 2018. *Coalitia pentru Familie: Comitetul National de Coordonare a Initiativei Cetatenesti. Comunicat de Presa*. <http://coalitiapentrufamilie.ro/2018/03/29/3-000-000-de-cetateni-romani-nu-sunt-o-masa-de-manevra-nu-sunt-o-masa-de-iobagi-pe-care-sa-dai-afara-din-cetate-la-venirea-serii-sau-la-venirea-comisarilor-sunt-milioane-de-suflete-si-de/>

- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hayes, Bernadette C. 1997. "The Influence of Gender on Public Attitudes toward Homosexual Rights in Britain." *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 9(4): 361-85.
- Herek, Gregory M. 1991. "Stigma, Prejudice, and Violence against Lesbians and Gay Men." In *Homosexuality: Research Implications for Public Policy*, edited by John C. Gonsiorek and James D. Weinrich, 60-80. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Herek, Gregory M. 2002a. "Heterosexual Attitudes toward Bisexual Men and Women in the United States." *Journal of Sex Research* 39(4): 264-74.
- Herek, Gregory M. 2002b. "Gender Gaps in Public Opinion about Lesbians and Gay Men." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66(1): 40-66.
- Herek, Gregory M. 2004. "Beyond 'Homophobia': Thinking about Sexual Prejudice and Stigma in the Twenty-First Century." *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 1(2): 6-24.
- Haider-Markel, Donald P. and Mark R. Joslyn. 2008. "Beliefs about the Origins of Homosexuality and Support for Gay Rights: An Empirical Test of Attribution Theory." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 72: 291-310.
- Held, Maximilian, Jan Müller, Franziska Deutsch, Ewa Grzechnik, and Christian Welzel. 2009. "Value Structure and Dimensions: Empirical Evidence from the German World Values Survey." *World Values Research* 2(3): 55-76.
- Inglehart, Ronald. 1997. *Modernization and Postmodernization: Cultural, Economic, and Political Change in 43 Societies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- Inglehart, Ronald and Wayne E. Baker. 2000. "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values." *American Sociological Review* 65:19-51.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Christian Welzel. 2010. "Changing Mass Priorities: The Link between Modernization and Democracy." *Reflections* 8(2): 551-67.
- Inglehart, Ronald and Christian Welzel. 2005. *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA). 2017. The ILGA-RIWI Global Attitudes Survey on Sexual, Gender and Sex Minorities. <https://ilga.org/minorities-report-2017-ilga-riwi-global-attitudes-survey>
- ILGA-Europe. 2017. *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe*. [https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Attachments/annual\\_review\\_2017\\_online.pdf](https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Attachments/annual_review_2017_online.pdf)
- IRES COP. 2012. *Profiluri Electorale. Partea a 2-a. Inactivism, Lustratie, Intoleranta si Patriotism*. [http://www.ires.com.ro/uploads/articole/IRES COP\\_2012\\_-\\_II\\_-\\_Inactivism\\_lustratie\\_intoleranta\\_si\\_patriotism.pdf](http://www.ires.com.ro/uploads/articole/IRES COP_2012_-_II_-_Inactivism_lustratie_intoleranta_si_patriotism.pdf)
- Jakobsson, Niklas, Andreas Kotsadam, and Siri S. Jakobsson. 2013. "Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage: The Case of Scandinavia." *Journal of Homosexuality* 60(9): 1349-60.
- King, Mar E., Sam Winter, and Beverley Webster. 2009. "Contact Reduces Transprejudice: A

- Study on Attitudes towards Transgenderism and Transgender Civil Rights in Hong Kong.” *International Journal of Sexual Health* 21:17–34.
- Kite, Mary E., and Bernard E. Whitley. 1996. “Sex Differences in Attitudes toward Homosexual Persons, Behaviors and Civil Rights: A Meta-Analysis.” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22(4): 336-53.
- Lannutti, Pamela J. and Kenneth A. Lachlan. 2007. “Assessing Attitude toward Same-Sex Marriage: Scale Development and Validation.” *Journal of Homosexuality* 53(4): 113-33.
- Lewis, Gregory B. 2011. “The Friends and Family Plan: Contact with Gays and Support for Gay Rights.” *Policy Studies Journal* 39:217–38.
- Lewis, Gregory B., and Gossett, Charles W. 2008. “Changing Public Opinion on Same-Sex Marriage: The Case of California.” *Politics & Policy* 36(1): 4–30.
- Maurer, Trent W., and Keim, Cassidy. 2018. "Teaching about prejudice with a Bogardus Social Distance Scale Activity: Replication and Extension," *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 12(1): Article 7. <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstol.2018.120107>
- Moskowitz, David, Gerulf Rieger, and Michael E. Roloff. 2010. “Heterosexual Attitudes towards Same-Sex Marriage.” *Journal of Homosexuality* 57(2): 325-36.
- Nachescu, Voichita. 2005. “Hierarchies of Difference: National Identity, Gay and Lesbian Rights, and the Church in Postcommunist Romania.” In *Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia*, edited by Aleksandar Štulhofer and Theo Sandfort, 57-77 . Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press.
- Norton, Aaron, and Gregory Herek. 2013. “Heterosexuals’ Attitudes toward Transgender People: Findings from a National Probability Sample of U.S. Adults.” *Sex Roles* 68:738–53.
- Olson, Laura R., Cadge, Wendy, and Harrison, James T. 2006. “Religion and Public Opinion about Same-Sex Marriage.” *Social Science Quarterly* 87(2): 340–60.
- Pearl, Marcia, and Galupo, M. Paz. 2007. Development and Validation of the Attitudes toward Same-Sex Marriage Scale.” *Journal of Homosexuality* 53(3): 117–34.
- Ramet, Sabrina. 2006. “Thy Will Be Done: The Catholic Church and Politics in Poland since 1989.” In *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, edited by Peter J. Katzenstein and Timothy A. Byrnes, 117-47. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Sandu, Dumitru. 2010. “Modernising Romanian Society through Temporary Work Abroad.” In *A Continent Moving West? EU Enlargement and Labour Migration from Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Richard Black, Godfried Engbersen, Marek Okólski and Cristina Panfîru, 271-87. Amsterdam, NL: Amsterdam University Press.
- Sandu, Dumitru. 2011. *Opinia Publica din Romania in Context European: Structuri si Tendințe pe Spații Societale și Regionale 2007-2011*. Bucuresti, RO: Reprezența Comisiei Europene în România. [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dumitru\\_Sandu/publication/242654597\\_Opinia\\_publica\\_din\\_Romania\\_in\\_context\\_European\\_structuri\\_si\\_tendinte\\_pe\\_spatii\\_societale\\_si\\_r](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Dumitru_Sandu/publication/242654597_Opinia_publica_din_Romania_in_context_European_structuri_si_tendinte_pe_spatii_societale_si_r)

- egionale\_2007-2011/links/5531536f0cf2f2a588ad4907/Opinia-publica-din-Romania-in-context-European-structuri-si-tendinte-pe-spatii-societale-si-regionale-2007-2011.pdf
- Santona, Alessandra and Giacomo Tognasso. 2018. "Attitudes toward Homosexuality in Adolescence: An Italian Study." *Journal of Homosexuality* 65(3): 361-78.
- Schwartz, Joseph. 2010. "Investigating Differences in Public Support for Gay Rights Issues." *Journal of Homosexuality* 57(6): 748-59.
- Slootmaeckers, Koen and Indraneel Sircar. (2018). "Marrying European and Domestic Politics? The Marriage Referendum in Croatia and Value-Based Euroscepticism" *Europe-Asia Studies* 70(3): 321-344.
- Spina, Nicholas. 2016. "The Religious Authority of the Orthodox Church and Tolerance Toward Homosexuality." *Problems of Post-Communism* 63(1): 37-49.
- Swank, Eric and Lisa Raiz. 2010. "Predicting the Support of Same-Sex Relationship Rights Among Social Work Students." *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services* 22(1): 149-64.
- Swim, Janet K., Melissa J. Ferguson, and Lauri L. Hyers. 1999. "Avoiding Stigma by Association: Subtle Prejudice against Lesbians in the Form of Social Distancing." *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 21(1): 61-68.
- Tadlock, Barry L., Andrew R. Flores, Donald P. Haider-Markel, Daniel C. Lewis, Patrick R. Miller and Jami K. Taylor. 2017. "Testing Contact Theory and Attitudes on Transgender Rights." *Public Opinion Quarterly* 81(4): 956-72.
- Takács, Judit , and Ivett Szalma. 2011. "Homophobia and Same-Sex Partnership Legislation in Europe." *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal* 30(5): 356-78.
- Viski, Vlad L. 2015. "An Army of Generals without Rank-and-File: Building a Gay and Lesbian Social Movement in Romania after 2001." MA thesis, Central European University.
- Viski, Vlad L. and Voichita Nachescu. 2017. "Americans Are Trying to Poison Romania with Homophobia." *The Advocate*, January 17, 2017. <https://www.advocate.com/commentary/2017/1/17/americans-are-trying-poison-romania-homophobia>.
- West, Keon. 2018. "Understanding and Reducing Sexual Prejudice in Jamaica: Theoretical and Practical Insights From a Severely Anti-Gay Society." *Journal of Sex Research* 55(4-5): 472-85.
- West, Keon and Noel M. Cowell. 2015. "Predictors of Prejudice against Lesbians and Gay Men in Jamaica." *Journal of Sex Research* 52(3): 296-305.
- Whitehead, Andrew L. 2010. "Sacred Rites and Civil Rights: Religion's Effect on Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Unions and the Perceived Cause of Homosexuality." *Social Science Quarterly* 91: 63-79.
- Wood, Peter B. and John P. Bartkowski. 2004. "Attribution Style and Public Policy Attitudes Toward Gay Rights." *Social Science Quarterly* 85(1): 58-74.
- Woodford, Michael R., Jill Chonody, Kristin Scherrer, Perry Silverschanz, and Alex Kulick.

2012. “The ‘Persuadable Middle’ on Same-Sex Marriage: Formative Research to Build Support among Heterosexual College Students.” *Sexuality, Research and Social Policy* 9: 1-14.

World Values Survey. n. d. *Findings and Insights*.

<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp>

Yerkes, Mara A., Giulia M. Dotti Sani, and Cristina Solera. 2018. “Attitudes Toward Parenthood, Partnership, and Social Rights for Diverse Families: Evidence From a Pilot Study in Five Countries.” *Journal of Homosexuality* 65(1): 80-99.